HARVARD PLAYS

The Harvard Dramatic Club

Second Series

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Harvard University. Dramatic Club.

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Plays of the Harvard Dramatic Club ..

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HARVARD PLAYS

SECOND SERIES

EDITED BY

GEORGE P. BAKER

PROFESSOR OF DRAMATIC LITERATURE, HARVARD UNIVERSITY

THE HARVARD PLAYS

A Collection of One Act Plays

SELECTED AND EDITED BY

PROF. GEORGE P. BAKER

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A tragedy, costume, for 2 men, 2 women; 1 hour.

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By Louise Whitefield Bray

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INTRODUCTION

The Harvard Dramatic Club, before the War brought a pause of two years in its activities, had for some ten years produced annually as part of its activity three or four one-act plays. The four new selections from its repertory of one-act pieces included in this volume can hardly require any special introduction, for the history of the Harvard Dramatic Club was given in the prefatory matter to the volume of one-act plays of this Club published in 1918, and the reception by the public of the four plays therein contained shows that they were welcome to readers and amateur acting organizations. The plays here printed have not been chosen as the only remaining four sufficiently worthy, for there are others any editor would be glad to see published in a volume like this, but as a group which perhaps gives the volume best variety and balance. The editor's hope is that they may please their public as well as did the first group of Harvard Dramatic Club plays.

When the first volume of one-act plays was printed it looked as if the Harvard Dramatic Club might be discontinued for some time, but now when publication has not exhausted the supply of promising short plays in its repertory, the approach of peace permits the Club to make plans

to take up its work again. Wisely it has decided not to attempt any production before the autumn of 1919, but then it hopes to resume its semi-annual productions of long and short plays. Soon, therefore, it should again be producing plays which may make material for further volumes in this series.

GEORGE P. BAKER.

GARAFELIA'S HUSBAND

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY

ESTHER WILLARD BATES

CHARACTERS

Balak Hutchinson
Garafelia, *his wife*
Orion Pike, *the hired man*
The Reverend Mr. Steele
Doctor Torrey

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GARAFELIA'S HUSBAND

SCENE: *A large New England kitchen with dark, stained wainscoting half way up the walls, and above it plaster, once painted a yellow brown, but now faded and shadowy. There are two twelve-paned windows in back with tattered holland shades. At their sills are pots of ivy geranium and begonia in full bloom. The floor is dark with age, the ceiling low and dingy, and there are three doors, one leading into the dining room, one to the woodshed, and one to the yard. The latter has two long panels of glass set in the upper portion, and these and the windows look out on a country road, and beyond that, to an orchard. Bare trees and withered grass show that it is late in November. The sky is still pink with sunset.*

No lamps are lit within, but where the chimney jog widens into an enormous fireplace, the crane is swung back and upon the black andirons a pile of logs is richly blazing. The iron sink with its pump stands between the fireplace and the windows. Beneath the latter is a shabby, upholstered sofa. There are three stiff-backed kitchen chairs and a table. Between the windows and over the chimney place hang bunches of seed corn affording great masses of orange-yellow color. Above these

are strings of red pepper. The effect of the entire room is darkly rich in color.

But the most conspicuous object in the room is a large, old-fashioned four-poster bed, with a feather mattress and a brilliant patchwork quilt for covering. Beneath it is a small leather chest, stowed away. On the right-hand side, close to the head, is a light stand with some bottles, a tumbler of water, a teaspoon, and two small bowls, suggesting herb tea.

TIME: *A November evening a few years ago.*

When the curtain rises, Balak is discovered sunk into the depths of the feather bed. He is an old man of seventy or thereabouts, feeble almost to helplessness, but whose bodily weakness is contradicted by a vivid look in the eyes and an unexpected vigor of voice. He is asleep, and Garafelia, a woman of fifty-five, straight, thin, with hair drawn tightly back from her face, and wearing a nondescript wrapper, stands looking down at him with tenderness. She smooths the quilt, brings a glass of fresh water, and tucks in the sheet at the head of the bed.

GARAFELIA. Balak! [*He doesn't answer.*] [*With great relief*] He's sound asleep. [*She sighs and reaching under the bed draws out a leather-covred chest. She tries it. It is locked. She goes again to the bedside, searching deftly under the pillows for the key, and draws it forth.*]

GARAFELIA. Balak, ef you was in your right mind, I would n't hev to do this. [*Then she draws the chest over by the fireplace, and with her back*

to the bed, kneels and unlocks it. Balak stirs slightly but she does n't see him while she is turning over piles of old letters, a few folded documents, memorandum books, and so forth. Then Balak, opening his eyes, begins to glare wildly, peering at Garafelia to see what is in front of her. She has found what she wanted, and folding the document, places it inside her dress. Balak makes an inarticulate noise, and then with an effort, throws the quilt on the floor and manages to sit up.]

BALAK. You scarlet woman! What are you doing with my chist? [*He points a shaking finger at her, and she turns slowly and sadly.*]

GARAFELIA. Gittin' somethin' of my own.

BALAK. They ain't nothin' in my chist as belongs to you! Gimme the key!

GARAFELIA. I'd orter take care of it myself.

BALAK. Here I lay! A sick man! I dunno but I'm a-dyin'! An' you come to persecute me and torment me —

GARAFELIA. Oh, no, Balak. I don't want for to persecute you! I don't want to hurt you. I'm jest takin' care of ye! They ain't but one thing in this world I want, and thet's for you to know me once more. Oh, Balak, think jest one minute of old times, jest hark back! Don't you remember? I'm your wife! I'm Garafely!

BALAK. Y' ain't my wife nuther! I never see ye before! Ye're a strange woman! You're a habitation of devils and an unclean —

GARAFELIA. Don't! I can't bear you to say such things!

BALAK. An unclean thing, I say, and the hold of every foul sperit! Gimme the key to my chist!

GARAFELIA. I don't aim for to trouble ye! Here!

BALAK. Keep away! Throw it to me!

[*She sadly throws him the key and starts to walk away, while he carefully conceals the key again under the pillows.*]

BALAK. How come I to sleep so soun' and not rouse up when you come snoopin' nigh my pillar? Twice you tried to git thet key afore! Answer me, you daughter of Satan!

GARAFELIA. I give you suthin' to make you sleep —

BALAK. I knowed it! Ye put suthin' in my tea! I tasted it!

GARAFELIA. I had to.

BALAK. What was it?

GARAFELIA. I give ye six drops of paregoric, — not enough to hurt a baby! Now don't get excited —

[*Balak sits up again and, turning to the stand, seizes on a vial.*]

BALAK. Pison! Pison! Everyone of them pison! [*He draws out the cork and sniffs the bottle and throws it on the floor, then the other bottles, the glass of water, and the bowls of herb tea, muttering meanwhile. Orion Pike, carrying two milk pails, enters in the midst of this. He takes in the situation with evident enjoyment, while he passes to and fro, carrying the pails to the buttery, bringing out fresh cans, and proceeding to strain the milk.*]

ORION. Breakin' up housekeepin', Balak? You two ain't ben here a year yit!

BALAK. She 's ben tryin' to pison me! Out o' thet bottle!

[*Orion picks up the vial from the floor.*]

ORION. Paregoric! I snummy!

BALAK. She drugged me to git the key to my chist!

ORION. Oh, ho!

GARAFELIA [*to Orion*] What are ye standin' there for? Take your milk pails out in the barn where they belong!

BALAK. Don't ye go! Don't ye leave me till the doctor comes or the minister.

ORION. Guess I 'll stay!

GARAFELIA. As long as my husband is sick and out of his head, you take orders from me!

ORION. Now I dunno as he is your husband!

GARAFELIA. I ben merried to him upards o' thutty year!

ORION. I dunno who you are or where you come from! You two bought this farm a twelvemonth gone and no one knows anything about ye, not even the minister! Balak 's ben tellin' everyone you ain't got no legal right to be here —

BALAK [*almost intoning*] She is an evil thing. Let her not come nigh the door of my dwelling.

[*Garafelia looks at him despairingly and, going over to the sink, begins to peel potatoes.*]

ORION. We 'll save this bottle of paregoric, Balak. It 'll int'rest the districk attorney.

GARAFELIA [*dryly*] You 'll never int'rest no districk attorney on six drops of paregoric.

ORION [*His eyes keep roaming back to the open chest on the floor.*] Now what d' ye s'pose she wanted in your chest?

BALAK. She won't say.

ORION [*with an air of half-joking, half-veiled threat*] Ef ye took the deed to this piece of proputty, Balak 'll hev the law on ye!

GARAFELIA [*She peels another potato.*] I wish I had taken it. I did n't think to.

BALAK. Answer, ye woman! What did ye take from my chist?

ORION. Yes, what did ye take?

GARAFELIA [*She was about to tell Balak, but her face hardens when Orion repeats the question, and she goes back to her work.*] Only what belonged to me.

BALAK. They ain't nuthin' in my chist as belongs to ye!

GARAFELIA. Ye 've forgotten.

BALAK [*his voice shaking*] What did ye take? Ask her what she took, Orion.

ORION [*grinning*] She ain't talking to-day! Lemme git aout the papers and see what 's missin' from the box. [*He drags the chest over to the bed, and hands the papers to Balak who goes over them eagerly.*]

BALAK. Thar 's the deed.

[*Orion reaches itching fingers for it and looks it over; then lays it to one side.*]

ORION. Oh, the deed —

BALAK. And thar 's the receipts for the int'rest on the mortgage, and thar 's the mortgage paid in full, and here 's my letter of membership

to the Cong'agational Church. Answer me, ye woman, what did ye take?

GARAFELIA. Send that man off and I'll tell ye.

ORION. No, ye don't! I'm goin' to stay right here! Fust ye try to pison this old man with paregoric; then ye try to git the deed to his prop-utty and he catches ye at it!

GARAFELIA [*quietly and with dignity*] You ain't a fit man to be talked to, Orion Pike, and I had n't orter take no notice on ye, but you be a mischief-maker, and I got to. I never tried to pison Balak, but I had to git suthin' out of his chist. I can't hev folks say things about me thet ain't so, jest becuz my husband is out of his mind.

ORION. Balak's mind is jest as clear as a bell, and ef 't warn't, nuthin' don't excuse you from tryin' to pison him.

GARAFELIA [*still very quiet*] I only giv him six drops, — in his tea, — jest to git him to sleep. Not enough to pison a baby!

BALAK. Fust she persecutes me, then she robs me, and now she pisons me. Git her to go, Orion, I'm skeered of her.

GARAFELIA. No, no, Balak. I don't want to hurt you or trouble you. Make this man go, who has sown trouble betwixt us. Think how I 've cared for you, think how I ben tendin' you, and feedin' you! That don't look nohow like persecution!

BALAK [*He fixes his eyes solemnly on her and begins again to intone.*] She sets her abomination in the house that is called by my name —

GARAFELIA. Don't say it again —

BALAK. She lyeth in wait for prey, in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night.

GARAFELIA. Oh-h! [*She looks desperately at Orion.*] Don't you see he's got a twist in his mind? He'd never say them things to me,—to his own wife!

BALAK [*more wildly*] Y'ain't my wife nuther! Yer a scarlet woman and the hold of every foul sperit. Remove yourself far from me! Go, I say! Go!

GARAFELIA. I'm going. [*She leaves the sink and crosses the room to the dining-room door. Then she pauses and looks at Orion.*] But I ain't goin' far. [*She closes the door behind her. Balak watches her exit, and then sinks back trembling on his pillows. Orion clumsily draws the quilt up about him.*]

ORION. By Gorry, Balak, I don't wonder you want to git shet o' her!

BALAK. Is she gone?

ORION. I dunno! Mebbe she's listenin'. [*He tiptoes over and listens with his ear to the crack of the door, and then back.*] I don't hear nuthin'.

BALAK. She's there! She's allus there! I wish the minister 'ud come. He'd make her go.

ORION. I won't let her do you no harm.

BALAK. Then git her away!

ORION. I told ye before I can't order no one off another man's proputty.

BALAK. Wal, I'm goin' to leave it to ye in my will. I ben tellin' ye so right along.

ORION. Are ye sure *she* ain't got no claim on it?

BALAK [*bristling*] She?

ORION. Seein' as how she claims to be your wife —

BALAK [*He roars.*] She ain't my wife! It 's mine and I 'll do what I like with it.

[*Orion hushes him with a gesture, and listens. Then he tiptoes over to the door. There stands Garafelia leaning against the door-jamb, her face distorted with suffering, her hands clenched. She does not move or look ashamed, but masks her face again into hardness.*]

GARAFELIA. I told ye I was n't goin' far.

BALAK. O my God! Git a constable ef ye hev to.

[*Garafelia reaches out her hand and softly closes the door, so that she is no longer in sight.*]

ORION. I tell ye I ain't no right to order anyone out a house withouten it 's mine.

BALAK. Ef — ef — ef I giv it to ye now, will ye git her off?

ORION. Ye 'll hev to sign a deed, ye know, ef ye want me to keep her out.

BALAK. Git the deed drawed and I will.

ORION. You ben sayin' thet right along, so I brung a deed with me. [*He takes it out of his pocket with an attempt at naturalness.*]

BALAK. Ye hev! Terrible forehanded of ye. I dunno 's I 'm ready to-day.

ORION. Mebbe you want me to go off and leave you alone with her.

BALAK. You 're all agin me; I don't trust you nuther.

ORION. I guess I 'll be goin'!

BALAK. Oh, Lordy, Lordy, don't ye go, Orion! Lemme see the deed.

[*Orion, with an indifferent air, hands the deed to Balak, who opens it peevishly. Steele, the minister, passes the window and raps on the door. Orion opens it.*]

ORION. Glad to see you, Mr. Steele. Here's the minister, Balak. Mr. Steele, this is Balak Hutchinson. He ain't ben livin' in our town long, and he ain't feelin' very spry.

BALAK. No, I ben in gret trouble.

STEELE [*a little cautiously*] I am sorry to hear it. Can I help you in any way?

BALAK [*low and earnestly*] Git her off!

STEELE. Get who off —?

BALAK [*rapidly, but increasing in excitement as he goes on*] She come here, a year ago, mebbe it was two, I dunno — I don't remember. She's a stranger to me and all my ways. I never sot eye on her before, but she got me to come away with her to this town where I don't know nobody — and she persecutes me. She won't go away when I tell her, and she's round all the time. She sits at the table with me, she follers me where I go, and she says she's my wife! I moved my bed down here to git rid of her.

STEELE. I don't understand —

ORION. The woman's in the other room. And that ain't all, either. She's ben tryin' to pison him.

STEELE. Are you sure?

ORION. She's confessed. And Balak wants to

deed his proputty to me, so 's I can order her off the premises.

STEELE. Is that necessary?

ORION. If I 'm to take care of him.

STEELE. Let Mr. Hutchinson tell her to go.

BALAK. She does n't mind what I say.

ORION. Will you witness the deed, Mr. Steele?

STEELE [*dubiously*] Under the right circumstances, I might consent, — but — here —

BALAK. Sho! Hist me up, Orion. Oh, Lordy, what a pain I got. I think I be a-goin' to die — [*Orion hands him the pen.*] Promise me you 'll git her off?

ORION. You won't see her heels for dust. Here, Balak. Now, Mr. Steele.

STEELE. This seems — a trifle — hasty —

ORION. Ho, no, no, no! Balak 's ben intendin' it right along.

BALAK. No, I hain't nuther! I was goin' to leave it to you. Ye had the deed already in yer pocket. Ye told me she 'd keep a-persecutin' me ef I did n't deed it to ye!

STEELE. I cannot witness this without seeing the woman. Call her in and tell her of it.

ORION. No need to tell her anythin'! She 's got her eye to the keyhole now. Watch! [*He goes to the door. There stands Garafelia as before. Steele moves toward her, holding out his hand. She ignores it, but enters the room looking at him proudly and yet with shrinking.*]

STEELE. How do you do, Mrs. —

GARAFELIA [*firmly but sadly*] Mrs. Hutchinson is my name.

BALAK [*like the flick of a whip*] Y' ain't Mis' Hutchinson!

STEELE. Come, come, Mr. Hutchinson, this won't do. [*To Garafelia*] I've been hearing about you — I hope you will pardon me — I mean this kindly — but — can you prove you are who you say you are?

GARAFELIA [*dryly*] I dunno as you've any call to concern yourself in my affairs.

STEELE [*instantly peppery*] Then I may understand you've decided to go away?

GARAFELIA. No. [*She returns to her work at the sink.*]

STEELE. Mr. Hutchinson has asked me to have you removed. What have you to say?

GARAFELIA. I ain't goin'!

STEELE. Why do you wish to remain?

GARAFELIA. I can't leave him with thet thievin' critter! An' anyway, I b'long here!

STEELE. He says you are not his wife. [*Pause.*] Are you?

GARAFELIA. Yes, I am! I merried him in good faith and I ben livin' with him thutty year!

ORION. Likely story!

GARAFELIA. You shet your mouth, Orion Pike!

STEELE. I cannot remain to hear such bickering as this.

GARAFELIA. I ain't keepin' you as I know on.

ORION. Don't go, Mr. Steele. Ye see what she is!

STEELE. I think we can reach a better solution by invoking the divine blessing in a word of silent prayer. [*He rises ministerially, closes his*

eyes, and bends his head. Orion, embarrassed, bends his also. Balak watches Garafelia warily, and she, after a second, bursts out angrily, though the minister, with closed eyes, continues his devotions, disregarding her. When she begins, Orion opens his eyes with dispatch.]

GARAFELIA. No, I won't pray with you! You've condemned me in your heart! You've no sympathy with a heart-broken wife whose husband's turned agin her and wants her out of his house. I'm his legal wife and I know it, and he'd know it only he ain't in his right mind, and this scandal-mongerin' mischief-maker gits my proputty away from me!

STEELE [*opening his eyes and surveying her like one slowly returning to consciousness*] The true woman would be caring about her husband's love, not his property.

ORION. Leave her be. Let's jest finish up this business. [*He offers the pen to Steele.*]

STEELE. Have you any reason to offer why I should not sign this deed? [*He looks at Garafelia, but with an air of utter weariness, she has turned silently away, and gone back to her work.*] I am waiting to hear any objections. [*He signs.*] Her silence has convinced me that she has no legal claim on this man.

GARAFELIA [*without turning round*] No protest warn't needed. Your deed's no good.

ORION. What do you mean?

GARAFELIA. No man can sign away his homestead without his wife's signature. You ain't got mine.

BALAK. She ain't my wife.

ORION. There's your answer. Your signature ain't called for.

GARAFELIA. I am his wife. Read that. [*She draws a document from out her dress.*]

STEELE [*looking at it suspiciously*] Balak Hutchinson and Garafelia Keith — married — South Abington — 1884 —

BALAK. She stole it from my chist! It's mine, mine and Garafely's! She drugged me to git my keys! She giv me pison in my tea! She ain't my wife, Mr. Steele! Lord in heaven, how long shall I suffer her?

STEELE. Is it true you drugged this man?

GARAFELIA. I had to git my merriage certificate. People was sayin' things that warn't so.

ORION. Another woman's marriage lines won't do you no good.

GARAFELIA [*to Steele*] I swear they are mine.

STEELE. My good woman, that paper is of no value unless you can be identified. People who know you, where are they?

GARAFELIA. I could n't hev them see Balak like this!

BALAK. I never laid eye on her before!

STEELE [*doubtfully, yet with a certain pity*] You see how this man regards you.

GARAFELIA. Not always. Sometimes, — I think — he remembers.

STEELE [*not unkindly*] Unless you can show us who you are, I think you had better go away.

[*Garafelia gives him a long look and then turns desperately to Balak.*]

GARAFELIA. Balak, see if I can't make you remember who I am — and how we was married in South Abington thutty years ago last June. Your father and mother druv over from Bridgewater for the weddin', and Jotham stood up with you and your sister Nell with me. You remember Nell, don't you? [*She stops almost hopefully and looks at him but Balak regards her with a steady, unwinking look.*] And we went to live down at the little white house at Four Corners, and you sot out them butternut trees by the front gate and the row of white lilacs —

BALAK. I — dunno — what — [*He turns to Orion.*] Do I remember?

ORION [*muttering*] Cos not!

GARAFELIA [*drawing a little nearer to him*] Oh, you do remember! An' summer nights, comin' home from the shoeshop, and me meetin' you by the orchard gate so 's we could walk up through the gardin and see how things was growin'. Don't you recollect them tiger lilies by the stone wall? [*Balak looks at her in a troubled way.*] Oh, Balak, you can't hev forgot it all! The things thet happened in thet little house. You hain't forgot the night Jotham was born? An' you come up to see him, and he took right holt of your finger, an' you sot there tell daylight, never movin' — [*Balak continues to look straight at Garafelia. He makes an inarticulate noise in his throat. Garafelia's voice grows harsh and breaking.*] Ah, Balak, we didn't ever think we should lose him, did we? And when he died, you was good to me — I shall never forgit how good. Oh,

Balak — be good to me now! [*Garafelia inadvertently draws too near the bed, and Balak, who has been following her intently, suddenly shrinks back like a frightened child and clutches Orion.*]

BALAK. Take her away! I'm afraid of her! Don't let her look at me like that!

[*Garafelia turns abruptly away and walks to the window, her back to the men, who are both somewhat affected by her pleading. Orion recovers himself first.*]

ORION. Ye can't make a man remember what he ain't seen.

GARAFELIA [*turning on him suddenly*] You devourer of widow's housen! You deviser of iniquity! May you lie down with bitterness and rise up in sorrow! May the day come to pass when God shall smite you with an everlasting curse!

ORION [*starting towards her*] I'll learn you to curse —

GARAFELIA [*snatching up the poker from the fireplace*] Go! Take yourself off and leave me with my man.

STEELE. My good woman, he's dying.

ORION [*retreating toward the door*] You don't bulldoze me! I'll get the sheriff here, or the first man I see, and run you out of this town. [*He goes out, and Balak gives a wail of fear.*]

GARAFELIA [*to Steele*] You, too!

[*Steele looks at her pityingly and goes out with dignity, but Balak, seeing he is left alone, cowers down under the quilt and begins to mutter rapidly.*]

BALAK. In the twilight, in the evening, in the

black and dark night, she lyeth in wait for prey. Her mouth droppeth gall and honey, her lips speak evil. The words of the strange woman are a deep pit and her end is bitter as wormwood. Remove her way far from me. Let her not come nigh the door of my dwelling.

GARAFELIA. Oh, Balak, don't die with words like that on your lips. I can't leave you. I must stay with you even if you hate me.

[*A sound of buggy wheels is heard and Orion's voice off stage. "Doctor, doctor! Come quick!" Then the doctor's voice, "Whoa!" and the dropping of the weight. The three men pass the window and enter, the Doctor, alert but uncurious, Orion bearing a pitchfork, Mr. Steele puzzled, but with growing sympathy for Garafelia. She still stands as she did, on the defensive, her back to the fireplace, the poker in her hand.*]

GARAFELIA. Doctor? [*He nods while he draws off his overcoat and she drops the poker.*] Oh, Doctor, he's dying! Make him live a little longer!

DOCTOR. We'll do what we can, Mrs. Hutchinson.

ORION [*in a stage whisper*] She ain't his wife.

BALAK. No, she ain't my wife! She's Babylonian woman; her feet take hold on hell—

DOCTOR [*taking Balak's pulse and noting that he shrinks when Garafelia brings a spoon*] Sure! Sure thing! Course they do.

BALAK. Doctor, git her away. She come to my house and she brung me to this town where I don't know nobody. She's a habitation of devils,

and the hold of every foul sperit, and she shall be cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone —

DOCTOR [*He motions Garafelia to the back of the room where Balak cannot see her.*] So she shall! Don't you worry any more but take a little of this. Now she 's gone and you can go right back to sleep.

[*Balak drinks obediently and closes his eyes, and the Doctor takes up his stethoscope.*]

ORION. Doctor!

DOCTOR. Uh-huh?

ORION. See any symptoms of pisoning?

DOCTOR. Can't say as I do. [*He looks shrewdly round at Orion.*] You look disappointed.

ORION. Wal, his iron constitution has withstud it, that 's all!

DOCTOR. If you 've anything to say, out with it!

ORION. Ask this woman here to tell you what she told me she giv him.

[*But the Doctor puts the ends of the stethoscope in his ears, so that he cannot hear, and smiles benevolently at Orion, who stops in a rage.*]

DOCTOR. I 'm not so plumb curious as you are, Orion.

ORION. She giv' him paregoric! [*shouting*]

STEELE. In justice we must say it was only a few drops.

DOCTOR [*removing stethoscope*] Well, now, I might have prescribed that myself if he got a mite restless. Orion, I wonder if you can saw me some hickory logs, so they 'll last all night? I like to

hear you sawing wood, Orion. [*Orion hesitates but finally goes off sulkily. The Doctor looks meditatively at the minister for a moment.*] Mr. Steele, would you be so kind as to take my horse in and blanket him and give him a measure of oats?

STEELE. Certainly. [*He goes to the door and then pauses.*] And how is Mr. Hutchinson?

DOCTOR. Pretty low.

STEELE. You wish me to return?

DOCTOR [*to Garafelia*] Shall he?

GARAFELIA. I don't care —

[*Steele bows his head in assent and goes out. Balak sleeps. The Doctor goes over to Garafelia.*]

DOCTOR [*sitting down side of her*] He may sleep for half an hour. Tell me, how long has he been having these delusions?

GARAFELIA. Then you think — you know — he 's really not himself?

DOCTOR. He 's not himself.

GARAFELIA. And you — you believe — you truly believe I 'm his wife?

DOCTOR. I believe you are a true and faithful wife. [*Garafelia sits perfectly still for a moment, her face quivering. Then she wipes her eyes with a single gesture and without relaxing her set composure.*] Has he been this way long?

GARAFELIA. It must have been coming on, but I did n't know it, — it 's two years anyway.

DOCTOR. And how did it begin?

GARAFELIA. He got religion, and getting it late, somehow, he took it terrible hard. He began shetting me up in my room and praying with me, oh, for hours, some days. An' one day, it seemed

as ef I could n't stand it no longer, nohow, an' I tol' him I could n't pray with him, —

DOCTOR. And then?

GARAFELIA. He begun to turn agin me. He 'd not speak to me for days and days, but he 'd set and look at me for hours tell I thought I 'd go crazy!

DOCTOR. When did he first fail to know you?

GARAFELIA. One night. I woke up and found him staring at me. When I spoke to him, he called me the Babylonian woman, and made me git aout of bed —

DOCTOR. And after that?

GARAFELIA. He begun talkin' to the neighbors about me, and, Doctor, I could n't bear it!

DOCTOR. You must have had friends —

GARAFELIA. They wanted me to put him into an asylum, but I was afraid they would n't be kind to him there, so I got him to come here where nobody knowed us, — and I dunno as I did right after all.

DOCTOR. Yes, yes, you did right, I am sure.

GARAFELIA. Then I don't mind so much, so 's I 'm sure I did right. I would n't mind what people said, nor all these months of livin' this way, nor the things he 's said to me, ef he 'd only look at me the way he used to, jest once, with his eyes wide an' clear, the way they used to be, and smile a little, and say, "Garafely!"

DOCTOR. There 's a chance, one in a hundred, that he might.

GARAFELIA. Doctor! You mean — know me?

DOCTOR. Yes, when the change sets in. [*Garafelia lifts her head and sits very still. After a pause Orion kicks the door open and enters with his arm full of logs which he dumps noisily by the fire.*] Fine! Put on a couple, Orion. And now, Mrs. Hutchinson, you go and rest a little. If he wakes, I will call you. [*Garafelia goes out.*] Now, Orion, you and I can have a nice talk.

ORION. What about?

DOCTOR. For one thing, what are you hanging round for?

ORION. None of your damn business!

DOCTOR [*cheerfully counting tablets into a tumbler*] Now don't raise your voice like that to me, Orion, or the next time you have one of your spells, I won't give you a pill! There's no other doctor within sixteen miles! [*Steele quietly enters from the woodshed door.*] Speak up, Orion! What have you been doing?

STEELE. You have nothing to conceal.

ORION. And *you* mind *your* own business!

DOCTOR. Mrs. Hutchinson let fall a word or two about property. Do you know what she meant?

STEELE. Is there any reason why you should not speak up, Orion?

DOCTOR. You've been getting this old man to give you something in his will he had n't ought to?

ORION. No! He has n't made any will! You think you're smart, don't you?

STEELE. I will tell you, Doctor.

ORION. Don't you do it! A witness ain't no right to tell!

STEELE. Mr. Hutchinson deeded this house to Orion Pike and I witnessed it.

DOCTOR. Orion, let me see that deed.

ORION. You hold your breath tell I do.

DOCTOR. Well, then, I suppose you'd just as soon tell me what's in it?

ORION [*with unction*] It says that Balak Hutchinson gives to Orion Pike and his heirs and assigns forever a quitclaim deed to house and land abuttin' on the corner of High and School streets, in consideration of one dollar and benefits conferred.

DOCTOR. Sounds like good law, Orion, but — did Mrs. Hutchinson sign it?

ORION. They ain't no Mis' Hutchinson!

DOCTOR. Oh, yes there is! Right in the next room.

ORION. How do you know? You never saw her before! Balak denies her! Nobody knows her!

DOCTOR. Her husband may —

ORION. He 'll be dead and buried 'fore he reckernizes her.

DOCTOR. Perhaps. Perhaps not.

ORION [*He mutters.*] I'll risk it.

STEELE [*to the Doctor*] Do you mean there is a chance?

DOCTOR [*very gravely*] When one races, there is always a chance.

STEELE. A race —?

DOCTOR. With death.

[*Orion looks first at one and then at the other. Then he goes over to the chair by the back door*

and sits, stubbornly holding his document. The light grows dimmer and the fire light leaps up higher. Steele goes to the farther side of the bed and looks down at the sleeping old man. Then, sitting down, nearly out of sight, he draws out his Bible and begins to read reverently.]

STEELE. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither be afraid. Ye believe in God, believe also in me.

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Not as the world gives, give I unto you — "

[*Garafelia comes silently through the dining-room door and goes to the Doctor.*]

GARAFELIA. Is there any change?

DOCTOR. Not yet.

[*Garafelia goes over to the sofa and sits down, looking straight in front of her, her hands lying limply in her lap. The grandfather's clock whirrs, as if about to strike and Balak stirs slightly. They look at him but he is still again, so Steele resumes his reading.*]

STEELE. "Yet a little while and the earth seeth me no more. But ye see me. Because I live, ye shall live also.

"And now I go my way unto him that sent me, and none of you ask of me, whither goest thou?"

[*Then the clock strikes six very slowly and Balak opens his eyes, and speaks as if dreaming.*]

BALAK. Garafely! [*He looks about as if dazed, and then stares, puzzled, through the window.*] Where are the butternut trees gone? Garafely, where 's them lilac bushes? [*He stares vacantly*

at Orion and then looks at the Doctor, speaking to him.] Who be you?

DOCTOR. A stranger.

BALAK. Where be I?

DOCTOR. In your own kitchen.

BALAK. This ain't my home— [*He sinks back exhausted on the pillows.*]

STEELE [*after a second or two*] "In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and where I am, ye may be also."

BALAK [*stirring again slightly*] Where's Garafely?

[*Garafelia leans from her chair, not daring yet to move.*]

DOCTOR. Garafelia?

BALAK. My wife—

DOCTOR. I will call her—

STEELE [*very low and reverently*] "And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband—

"And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say, Come, and let him that is athirst, come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

[*During the reading, the Doctor looks at Garafelia, who comes slowly out of the shadows. As she draws near the bed, Balak stretches out his hands to her feebly. She takes them and kneels at the bedside, gazing at him.*]

GARAFELIA. Balak, who be I?

BALAK [*clearly*] Garafely! Garafely Keith!

[*Balak sinks suddenly back on his pillows, Garafelia raises herself and looks at him. She finds he has passed away and falls on her knees in a torrent of tears. Orion, a look of real awe on his face, drops the paper from his hands to the floor.*]

SLOW CURTAIN

THE FOUR-FLUSHERS

A SATIRICAL FARCE IN ONE ACT

BY

CLEVES KINKEAD

CHARACTERS

HENRY CUNNINGHAM, *a married man*
MURIEL CUNNINGHAM, *his wife*
VINCENT DULANEY, *her affinity*
FULLER, *their butler*
AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR

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THE FOUR-FLUSHERS

TIME: *The present.*

PLACE: *New York.*

SCENE: *The hour is well along in the afternoon of an early winter day, and the scene is laid in the receiving room of the Cunningham suite on Fifth Avenue. At the rear of stage a wide doorway is open into a hallway. Entrance from street is through this hallway from stage left. The doorway has heavy tapestry curtains on each side of it drawn up on the inside of the room. Through the doorway can be seen a hat-rack in the hall. Silk hat and crook cane hang on rack. There is a door down stage right and an electric button on wall near this door. The afternoon light comes through a window upper stage left and blends with the glow from lighted fireplace down stage left. Near the center is a large table with substantial locked drawers in it. Another small table is near fireplace. On this table are tea things, cigarettes, cigars, a decanter of brandy, a siphon. All of these things show evidence of use, and from the edge of a tea saucer on table a lighted cigarette sends up a thread of smoke. There are several chairs, and a large sofa is near the fireplace. A large, ornate phonograph stands in upper right-hand corner of the room.*

Modern dance music, played on the phonograph,

greets the ears of the audience before the rise of the curtain, and as it is going up Mrs. Cunningham and Dulaney are on stage. They are both dressed in the very latest afternoon raiment and are a handsome couple, not extremely youthful, but rather sophisticated in appearance; and each gives the impression of desiring to omit no detail of dress or manner which may make for smartness. The man may be a couple of years past thirty, the woman falling that much short of it. She is rather more of the handsome, graceful, dashing type than the pretty woman, and there is a certain hardness in her aggressiveness. Her charm is in her dash and vivacity, and the latter is tempered by a discernment or judgment which dwells in a woman, though generally reckoned as being among the masculine virtues. There is a certain slickness and slyness about the man which robs a good-looking but weak face of some of its charm of regular features. They dance with abandon, kicking up a rug and knocking over a piece of bric-a-brac. As the phonograph grinds and bumps he shuts it off. He mixes a highball of the brandy and soda. The man clinks the ice in his glass and his companion looks at him with contentment — the temporary contentment which can come to one of her nature — and speaks. He lights a cigarette.

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. Vincent, there is an atmosphere about this room which my husband can never appreciate. [*She fans away cigarette smoke.*]

DULANEY. Yes, I know, Muriel — there is an

atmosphere about all our best homes which only those to the manner born can sense. [*He takes a good pull at his highball.*]

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. The difference between my husband and you is the difference between the bourgeois and the gentleman.

DULANEY. Wise little girl, you know the reality of distinctions — and can you not feel the reality of affinity? [*He takes her in his arms and kisses her. At this moment Henry Cunningham comes into the hallway attired in a business suit. He removes his hat and overcoat and as he goes to hang them on the rack he is surprised to find that Dulaney's silk hat and cane are hanging there. He makes room for his and looks inside Dulaney's hat for the initials. Cunningham is a mild-looking individual, perhaps seventeen or more years older than his wife. His manner and voice are suggestive — though not with exaggeration — of the sissy type, but his features are not without a certain sharpness and cunning. As he eases into the doorway a look of surprise is chased from his face by one of consternation, which becomes one of pain as the embrace of his wife and her lover become more impassioned. He sways and clutches at the heavy curtain and then shrinks behind it and remains in hiding while the lover resumes his discourse.*] It is this natural affinity between us which makes our love a holy thing.

MRS. CUNNINGHAM [*leaping up from the sofa and pointing her finger at Dulaney with some heat in her manner*] Don't call our love a holy thing, Vincent Dulaney.

DULANEY. But is it not so?

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. Oh yes — perhaps — but it's just what Henry Cunningham said when he bought me for his wife. [*She resumes her seat and gazes into the fire meditatively.*] It's a bitter moment in a woman's life when she hears her lover talking just as her husband did.

DULANEY. Well, what do you expect a mere man to say?

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. Say? Say? We don't care what men say. What women want to-day is *action.* [*He makes a grab at her but she pushes him away.*] No, no, don't be crass. I meant resolution — decision.

[*The man rises, lights a cigarette, and stands with his back to the fire, flicking the ash from his cigarette and thinking.*]

DULANEY. But, Muriel, you must know why I have not insisted on an elopement.

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. Perhaps you thought I would n't elope?

DULANEY. Oh no, I 've always been certain you would, to be frank. But I know how dependent you are for happiness on money — and I have none.

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. Oh Vincent, why did n't you tell me that you had no money right at first?

DULANEY. Because that is always the *last* thing I ever tell anyone.

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. But you need not have kept it from me. If money is all that is keeping us apart we can elope in ten minutes.

DULANEY. But, Muriel, you know how you *have* to have money.

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. Yes, and I *have* it too.

DULANEY. *You* have it — you mean your husband has it?

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. I mean just this — that before I married Henry Cunningham I exacted an unconditional settlement on me of a million dollars.

DULANEY [*jumps with surprise but catches himself*] A million dollars — unconditionally — [*smiles off-handedly*] for better or worse?

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. Yes. And now that our obstacle is removed —

DULANEY [*holding up his hands in protest*] But is it altogether removed?

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. Have I not money enough for us both — a million?

DULANEY. Yes, that's quite enough — but think of my birth and breeding, Muriel. I have a delicacy about living on another — I am a gentleman.

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. But gentlemen have lived on other people since the world began.

DULANEY [*laughing and grabbing Mrs. Cunningham as driven by an irresistible impulse*] Oh you darling — your cleverness is unanswerable, your beauty is irresistible, you can do as you like with me. Think of the wonder of love, Muriel, my sweet. Here am I — a strong man — like a child in your hands. We shall go to the ends of the world and snap our fingers in its face. [*Glances sheepishly and catches himself.*] I mean — er — er, that is — we shall go — we shall go.

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. Well, then, let's go while the going's good.

DULANEY. This madness born of joy — it is your wish, my dear?

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. Yes, I'm a practical woman, Vincent, and what I want I go after. Now Mother will be in from Newport to-day, and she's awfully prejudiced against this sort of thing — you know how the old families look on elopements, especially if one is married — and Henry may be in at any moment. So there is no time to lose. You go pack a bag while I'm getting a few things together. Then come back here in a taxi. Hurry up, now. [*She goes swiftly to door right and he to door center. They pause on the threshold and blow a kiss.*]

DULANEY. Au revoir, fearless little warrior. I'll be back in a few minutes. [*Exit Mrs. Cunningham. Dulaney smiles.*] Oh what a snap! Onward Christian soldier! [*He takes his hat and cane from the rack, puts on his hat a little to one side, strikes an attitude, and rests his cane against his shoulder as a soldier would a sword. Exit Dulaney with a burlesque march.*]

[*For a moment the stage is clear. Then from behind his curtain the husband sticks his head before he emerges. His expression is that of a man so dumbfounded as to appear ridiculous. He comes slowly down stage, scratching his head. He presses button, waits, presses it again, and then seats himself in chair center, facing audience. His expression is one of comical, dejected helplessness. Behind his back there is business of curtain on the*

right side of doorway and the head of Fuller, the butler, is thrust forth. Fuller is a man of rather impressive personality. He is dressed in the conventional butler outfit, and wears burnsides through which the wind would like to frolic. His hair is white. His voice accentuates a dry humor in his remarks and gives weight to his words. Cunningham turns before Fuller has completely emerged from the curtain and spies him, but the butler is undaunted and comes slowly down stage.]

FULLER [*looking insinuatingly at curtain behind which Cunningham was hidden*] Like master [*then glancing at other curtain*] like man, sir. You rang, sir?

CUNNINGHAM. Yes — er — but, Fuller, I just happened to get behind that curtain and found it embarrassing to leave.

FULLER. I understand, sir. I just happened to get behind *that* one and found it impossible to leave.

CUNNINGHAM. You know as much as I do, then?

FULLER. Yes, sir — that is, about what has just happened here.

CUNNINGHAM. A most unfortunate situation, Fuller.

FULLER. But not altogether uncommon, sir.

CUNNINGHAM. I 'm completely surprised.

FULLER. Yes, sir — the husband always is, sir.

CUNNINGHAM. You 've had experience in these affairs, then, Fuller?

FULLER. I 've served in some of the best homes in New York, sir.

CUNNINGHAM. Oh — yes, I see. But have you heard my wife talking before with her friend — er — her lover — how shall I term him? Her —

FULLER. Affinities they are called now, sir.

CUNNINGHAM. Yes, I thank you. Have you heard them or seen them together before?

FULLER. I came here to work only yesterday, sir. But judging from their way with one another, they had become well acquainted at that time, sir.

CUNNINGHAM [*wincing*] Yes — er — Fuller, I say — did they talk of eloping then?

FULLER. Not so definitely, sir.

CUNNINGHAM. You have n't overheard them saying where they meant to go?

FULLER. They mentioned Paradise, sir.

CUNNINGHAM [*leaping up from his chair and pacing about the room*] Paradise! Paradise! oh dear, that makes me *so* uncomfortable!

FULLER. On a trip to such a place none of us would like to be left out, sir.

CUNNINGHAM [*going to drawer in table he takes from same a pistol and examines the chambers*] They will go to no such place. I shall prevent them, Fuller — mark my words, I shall prevent them. When I was a younger man I was accounted one of considerable spirit. [*He takes a swaggering pose in front of the decanter, tosses off a drink of brandy, then pours out another.*]

FULLER. Have a care of that brandy, sir.

CUNNINGHAM [*unimpressively severe*] Remember, Fuller, you 're my butler.

FULLER. Yes, sir, thank you, sir, but no one could be better qualified to speak of the effects of that brandy than your butler, sir. When Mr. Dulaney comes back here for Mrs. Cunningham, it may cause you to lose your temper.

CUNNINGHAM. Lose my temper, indeed! I mean to show quite a bit of temper. I shall kill him.

FULLER. Begging your pardon, sir, but you must n't kill him.

CUNNINGHAM. Indeed, and why not?

FULLER. It 's no longer done, sir.

CUNNINGHAM [*puts down the glass without taking a second drink, walks to chair center, seats himself, awkwardly holding pistol, and looks up at Fuller with an inquiring expression*] No longer done?

FULLER [*advancing toward Cunningham's chair*] No, sir. Not in the best families, sir.

CUNNINGHAM. But am I to let him walk off with my wife when I 've only had her five months myself?

FULLER. Begging your pardon, sir, but how many of her suitors did you kill before you could win your wife?

CUNNINGHAM [*looking curiously at Fuller*] One does n't kill a rival to win a woman.

FULLER. Exactly, sir, and killing this one after marriage won't help you to keep her. You see, sir, when a husband butchers a lover it only makes the wife angry [*drawing nearer and rubbing together his hands with a growing enthusiasm for his own discourse*]. After such a deed the re-

lations of husband and wife are strained — not infrequently strained, sir. Something seems to come between them, and slowly but surely the pair will drift apart.

CUNNINGHAM. Dear, dear, how you go on. Fuller. You seem to be something more than a butler. One might think that you were an authority on life.

FULLER. You approve of my philosophy, sir?

CUNNINGHAM. Yes — er — I suppose so — but it all seems a little strange — coming from a butler.

FULLER. That's because the opportunities for philosophical discourse between master and man are so limited, sir. There is nothing that I enjoy more than discourse and repartee, but though I move in its atmosphere I am not of it. Often, sir, as I walk among the guests in a drawing room I am inspired by the conversation, and good things to say occur to me, sir — rejoinders, snappy rejoinders and all manner of quips, and often very subtle cynicisms, sir. But only fancy with what general disfavor I should meet if I attempted to engage in the repartee.

[*Toward the end of this speech Cunningham fidgets in his chair.*]

CUNNINGHAM. Pardon me, Fuller, I see that you like to talk and you talk well, but naturally I 'm a bit nervous, upset and —

FULLER. Yes, I 'm coming to that, sir. I know how a husband feels when his wife is about to leave with another man. Mine did it, sir — my first wife — years ago.

CUNNINGHAM. Oh, indeed! I knew there was something drawing us together, Fuller. [*Rises and emotionally puts his hand on butler's shoulder.*] Tell me, when she left you what did you do?

FULLER. I pursued the pair, sir, and overtook them.

CUNNINGHAM. But you counsel more pacific action on my part —

FULLER. Yes, sir, but I had to give my wife something that she had neglected to take with her.

CUNNINGHAM. Eh? What was that?

FULLER. The baby, sir. [*Pauses.*] I've never seen either since. [*He gazes into space and drops his voice.*] Yet to say that I'm an unhappy man would be to say that one's second wife is not as good a gamble as the first one.

CUNNINGHAM. But no man likes to lose his wife, Fuller.

FULLER [*thoughtfully*] Or is it, sir, that he does n't like to feel that another man can take her away from him? [*Cunningham starts.*] Perhaps that's why he'll be more concerned with killing the other man than holding the woman. [*The two men look at each other, and Cunningham slowly hands the revolver to Fuller, who pockets it.*] Of course there may be other ways of looking at these things, but I'm a philosopher.

CUNNINGHAM. Then tell me what to do, Fuller.

FULLER. But a philosopher does not tell one what to do, sir. He rather discourses on what one should have done. Seeing a troubled man, a philosopher will dwell on the futility of being wor-

ried, but in an emergency he suggests no definite plan of relief.

CUNNINGHAM. Well, who would, then — a policeman?

FULLER. Even he might have his limitations, sir. I fear, sir, that a man who will settle a million dollars on his prospective wife is beyond the comforts of philosophy or the aid of the police. [*Pauses.*] There should have been a string to it somewhere, sir.

[*The butler wags his head mournfully and surveys his master with the air of one who must unwillingly give up a hopeless case, but even as he so mournfully shakes his head the master's face lights up with an inspiration. Cunningham, seated, taps his forehead significantly, smiles, and while the butler bends lower over him and gazes with increasing surprise at his employer, the latter looks off into space and mumbles aloud.*]

CUNNINGHAM. A string to it. Eureka! [*tapping his forehead again*] Eureka!

FULLER [*to humor one he thinks is losing his mind, perchance*] Yes, sir, Eureka, sir.

CUNNINGHAM. Fuller, there is a string to it. You have given me the cue. [*The doorbell rings.*] There he comes, Fuller. I have an idea. Show him right in here.

[*Exit Fuller center to answer doorbell, and the master of the home walks up and down, pausing to light a cigarette on which he puffs with the awkwardness of inexperience. Dulaney does not wait for Fuller to announce him, but pushes past him*

on the threshold of doorway center and enters with a rush, while the butler walks across stage and goes out at door right.]

DULANEY. All ready, my angel— [*Surprised as he sees Cunningham.*]

CUNNINGHAM. Well met, by an outraged husband rather than a guilty wife. [*Dulaney makes ready for the worst, but Cunningham holds up his hand and motions him to a chair.*] But I am not angry. Let us reason together. Be seated. [*Dulaney is seated.*] You have come for my wife, I believe?

DULANEY [*coolly nodding*] Why, yes, I believe that 's the idea. But may I ask how you learned of our plans?

CUNNINGHAM. Certainly. I 've just been talking the matter over with Mrs. Cunningham.

DULANEY [*losing his coolness in his perplexity*] What 's that?

CUNNINGHAM. Yes, you see Muriel was under the impression that a prenuptial settlement which I made on her would hold even if she left me. [*He eyes Dulaney craftily as the latter starts and then attempts a disinterested attitude.*] I was pointing out to her that as the papers read she could only have her money by also having me. [*Closely watching the effect on Dulaney.*]

DULANEY. But what had this to do with me? I did n't come here to discuss your finances. I am too much of a gentleman to discuss money. I am here simply to elope with your wife.

CUNNINGHAM. Pardon me if I have misjudged

you. But sometimes gentlemen desire money as much as they desire other men's wives.

[*Cunningham looks at Dulaney, who seems to be thinking the matter over and catching his meaning.*]

DULANEY. If you want me to believe your story you 've got to show me the settlement papers.

[*Cunningham, without answering, takes a key from his pocket and holds it up significantly. He walks toward table and unlocks a drawer therein, takes out a document and hands it to Dulaney, who inspects same with interest.*]

CUNNINGHAM. These papers will prove to you that my wife must have married me because she happened to be attracted by the glitter of my soul as it sparkled in the sun.

FULLER [*poking his face in door right*] Capital, sir — very good indeed — a striking cynicism. Really, sir, I could n't have done better myself. [*Hastily withdraws and closes door.*]

CUNNINGHAM [*apologetically*] He 's quite a talker.

DULANEY. Something of a listener, too. [*Dulaney seats himself and scrutinizes document with undisguised interest. He is seated center facing audience, and Cunningham leans over the back of chair pointing to certain phrases in the writing from over Dulaney's shoulder.*]

CUNNINGHAM. You see there — and read that [*Dulaney reads to himself, and as the two are thus absorbed Mrs. Cunningham comes from stage right and appears on threshold of doorway center. She has on a hat and coat and is attired for traveling,*

carrying a bag. She gazes for a moment in amazement at the two men, who do not see her. Cunningham continues] — and that also, it cannot possibly be construed otherwise — if she leaves me she does n't get a cent.

[*Mrs. Cunningham, still on the threshold, is recovering from her surprise sufficiently to grasp the situation. Then she reels and falls toward the curtain right. A pair of masculine hands, white-cuffed and black-sleeved, reach out from the curtain and catch her: one of these hands goes over her mouth and she is drawn behind curtain. There is business of disturbed curtain, and a hand goes out from it and draws her bag behind it. Gradually the curtain is stilled while Dulaney continues his silent reading. He finishes and from his seat looks up at Cunningham.*]

DULANEY. Not a damned red cent — you 're right.

CUNNINGHAM [*preening himself*] Do you know, Mr. Dulaney, I often wonder why people so frequently take me for an ass.

DULANEY. That 's easy — it 's the way you look.

CUNNINGHAM. My experience in legal matters teaches me that a lawyer's reputation rarely helps his client — it 's character that counts. Never mind your lawyer's reputation, just so his character is bad.

DULANEY. Well, you certainly picked a winner to draw up this settlement. [*Confidentially*] And your wife and her mother think they have got you sewed up in a sack. [*Dulaney rises and tiptoes*

across stage to door right, which he opens hastily. He looks behind it, closes it, and then comes toward Cunningham.] I just wanted to see if that sneaking, blackmailing butler was at the keyhole.

CUNNINGHAM [*airily*] Yes?

DULANEY. I 'm no more of a gentleman than you are. Just between two crooks, I 'm the slickest four-flusher that ever graduated from the tea dances.

CUNNINGHAM. Then you 're neither a gentleman nor a society man?

DULANEY. Certainly not.

CUNNINGHAM. Then I don't believe that any decent married woman would elope with you if she knew it. And I 'll tell my wife.

DULANEY. She won't believe you. Why, the first time she saw me at the cabaret she thought that I was the one chance of her life to get into society.

CUNNINGHAM. But she 's in society — always has been.

DULANEY [*laughing and shaking his head*] If she had been, she would not have thought that *I* was.

CUNNINGHAM. But Muriel is the daughter of Mrs. Van Vleet — villa at Newport and all that sort of thing.

DULANEY. Say, have you ever seen that villa, or Mrs. Van Vleet?

CUNNINGHAM. No, but I 've been giving Muriel money for them both.

DULANEY. The worst of us have our uses. Dear little Muriel! She told me all about her old

Knickerbocker family, too, and the villa by the sea, and I pretended to believe it, all the while trying to find out about her money, and when she finally told me about the million dollars [*he gazes into space, smiling raptly*] — oh, I never knew what it really meant to love until then. [*He is for a moment as one in a pleasant day dream, then he seems to come to earth.*] See here, Cunningham, let's be frank and get down to business. [*Pauses, then draws closer.*] Give me a thousand dollars and I'll never go near your wife again.

CUNNINGHAM. This is blackmail.

DULANEY. Blackmail without witnesses is like pleasant discourse in a rose garden.

CUNNINGHAM. But a thousand dollars is a great deal of money.

DULANEY. It's not as much as you would have to pay William J. Burns to watch me.

CUNNINGHAM. But I haven't nearly so much money as people think.

DULANEY [*laughing*] Oh, cut it — a thousand dollars more or less is nothing to you. Why can't we get together on this? [*Then with an inspiration*] I'll tell you what — give me the money and hold out on her for that amount next time she asks you for money.

CUNNINGHAM [*smiling as the suggestion takes root*] I brought this home to give her in the morning. I meant to keep her in a good humor against some bad news I'll have. [*Drawing a roll of bills from his pocket he counts them*] A thousand dollars, all new, see? [*Dulaney reaches for it, but Cunningham withdraws his hand.*] I'll

tell you, we 'll split up this money of Muriel's between us — five hundred each as balm for the disappointment she gave us both.

DULANEY. Oh, that 's always what I have to expect — I always have to divide up every time I operate. All right. [*He takes his share.*] Shake hands.

CUNNINGHAM [*shaking hands*] Most extraordinary, most extraordinary.

DULANEY. How long have you lived in New York?

CUNNINGHAM. Less than a year.

DULANEY. Well, you 'll know before long that little old New York is full of ginks just as extraordinary as I am. [*Takes up his hat.*] But I must be getting along before Muriel comes into this room to elope. [*They smile, Cunningham not so merrily.*] It would never do for her to see us together. If you really want to hold your wife you don't want to let her know that you ever saw or heard of me. Forgive her, but don't let her know that you forgive her. For there are some things that no woman can forgive a man for forgiving her. It just convinces the woman that the man is a nut about her, and she 'll do as she pleases. [*Cunningham's features betray the most helpless chagrin.*] You 'd better get out that door [*indicating right*] before she comes. [*Cunningham hastens toward door then hesitates with his hand on the knob and speaks nervously.*]

CUNNINGHAM. Had n't you better leave her a note to say that you 've backed out of the elopement?

DULANEY. No notes to women for mine. I very nearly had to marry one once just for a pen scratch. She will just think that I never came and draw her conclusions.

CUNNINGHAM. But Fuller knows that you came.

DULANEY [*thoughtfully*] Oh — er — yes — ring for him and get out. I'll just tell that damned blackmailing sneak to tell her I've decided not to go with her.

[*Cunningham presses button in wall near door right and makes a cautious exit. Dulaney stands in center watching door right for the appearance of Fuller. The head of Fuller appears from behind curtain right side of doorway — where Mrs. Cunningham is also hidden. Fuller coughs to let Dulaney know that he has been hiding, and as the latter beholds his head the rest of the butler's person emerges and Fuller comes down stage.*]

FULLER. You rang, sir?

DULANEY [*embarrassed*] Yes, I have a message for Mrs. Cun —

FULLER. Yes, sir, I heard it all, sir.

DULANEY [*angered*] Trust you for that.

FULLER. Aye, sir, and I did admire your ability to turn a phrase, sir. When you said that "blackmail without a witness was like pleasant discourse in a rose garden" it struck me as a most expressive epigram, sir.

DULANEY. Yes — yes?

FULLER. And begging your pardon, sir [*drawing nearer to Dulaney and rubbing his*

hands] but what might you say to blackmail where there happened to be a witness, sir?

[*The two men look into each other's eyes, the butler with insinuation and Dulaney with comprehension.*]

DULANEY. I've seen you before.

FULLER. Yes, sir, I was the witness to one of your earliest and most elastic marriages, sir. Surely you remember me. [*Fuller gazes intently at Dulaney's features.*]

DULANEY. What are you looking at?

FULLER. That tiny scar, sir, over your left eye where you were struck by the girl's brother — I didn't know you at first, sir. But now the whole case comes back to me. It was all hushed up, too, and you left town for quite a while, sir.

DULANEY. Well, you keep your mouth shut.

FULLER. I *can* do it, sir. But there are tricks in all trades [*he coughs suggestively, and Dulaney hands him a bill*] and a man must live, sir. [*Dulaney peels off another.*]

DULANEY. Now mind, you'll keep quiet.

FULLER. Oh yes, sir. [*Dulaney makes a hasty exit.*] All right, ma'am, they've both gone. [*From behind the curtain Mrs. Cunningham, a chastened spirit, comes. She sinks down on sofa while Fuller pours her a drink of brandy.*] There now, my lady, this will pull you together. [*She drinks.*]

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. Oh, Fuller, was n't it terrible — a dozen shocks one right after the other, Fuller — and oh, when I ducked behind that curtain and found you there — oh, the shock of it —

FULLER [*standing back of the sofa and looking down at her solicitously*]. I'm very sorry, my lady.

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. And Vincent Dulaney — the low dog — the loathsome beast — [*She takes a picture from her bosom.*] Here's his picture. [*Looks at it.*] There was always something about his face that I didn't like. I wonder why I didn't notice it sooner. [*Throws picture into fire, and as the fireglow lights up her features she gazes meditatively into the flames.*] Oh, I had to have some one to play with, and the really attractive men — the men worth while — Fuller, have you noticed it?

FULLER. Noticed what, my lady?

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. That the men worth while don't run after married women.

FULLER. I dare say they mean no affront, ma'am. They're probably busy with other things.

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. That's it, Fuller, and the devil finds mischief for idle hands. Now I suppose that I am not the only woman who was ever bored with her husband.

FULLER. I knew one other well.

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. Who was that?

FULLER. My first wife, ma'am.

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. Did the marriage end unhappily.

FULLER. No, ma'am; we were divorced.

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. Oh — er — yes. [*She grows more thoughtful.*] Fuller, you would not tell me that I am a really bad woman, would you?

FULLER. Oh, no, ma'am, no man in service would tell his lady that.

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. Well, I know where I made my mistake, anyhow.

FULLER. A great many women do make matrimonial mistakes — and they turn out sometimes happily, sometimes successfully, and sometimes eugenically.

MRS. CUNNINGHAM. Now I 'm going to make the most of the bargain. [*Rises with resolution and walks toward door right, then pauses with her hand on the knob*] And, Fuller, I don't want my husband to know that I know that he knows, because he does n't want me to know that he knows.

FULLER [*scratches his head, then seems to catch the drift*] Oh, yes, I see. Neither one of you were able to fool the other, so you 're going to fool yourselves. And it 's not a bad idea, ma'am, for self-deception is the cornerstone of matrimony.

MRS. CUNNINGHAM [*looking at Fuller curiously*] Fuller, you don't seem altogether like a butler to me. I'd rather you would n't call me "my lady." It does n't seem natural.

FULLER. It is n't natural, ma'am, it 's civilized. [*Fuller bows and Mrs. Cunningham exits door right. Fuller begins to straighten out the tea things, tosses off a drink of brandy, and lines his vest-pocket with cigars.*]

[*Cunningham enters from the hallway, coming from the right, but not in time to observe the butler's business with the cigars.*]

CUNNINGHAM [*eagerly*] How is everything, Fuller?

FULLER. All right, sir. Just sit steady in the boat. She 's found a snug harbor, sir, and is casting her anchor.

CUNNINGHAM [*gravely*] Well, I hope it holds fast, Fuller, for there 's going to be an awful storm in the morning.

FULLER. How 's that, sir?

CUNNINGHAM. S-s-sh! draw nearer. This has been a day of disillusionments. First I find that my wife is untrue to me, then I learn that she is not the person she pretended to be, and then I find that even her lover was a — what was the term used —

FULLER. Four-flusher, sir?

CUNNINGHAM. Yes, and now I 'm beginning to wonder if even I may not have placed myself — what might I say — er — may not have placed myself in a false light.

FULLER. Say not so, sir. Surely I am not the only person here who is strictly on the square, sir.

CUNNINGHAM. I 'm afraid you are, Fuller, but in order that you may lose nothing from the wreck [*he produces a yellow bill*] — and to keep your goodwill — [*Hands bill to Fuller, who pockets it.*]

FULLER. Then you 're not a millionaire, sir?

CUNNINGHAM. I drew my last thousand dollars out of bank to-day, Fuller.

FULLER. And you gave half of that to Mr. Dulaney, sir?

CUNNINGHAM [*chuckles*] Not much I did —

that was bogus paper I handed him. [*Fuller clutches at his pocket, sways, and puts his hand to his brow, while his features reflect agony.*] What 's the matter, my man?

FULLER. Nothing, sir — nothing but the shock, sir. But seeing your finish, sir, would you mind telling me how you got your start, sir?

CUNNINGHAM. I came from the great middle west, Fuller, about a year ago, with $56,000 in real money. When I got through telling who I was people wanted to meet me. Several women wanted to marry me, but Muriel somehow made me believe that she really cared [*grows sentimental in his tone*] for me and not for my millions. Perhaps it was because she made me think that so many other millionaires were trying to marry her. All her friends were men of money, that is —

FULLER. Yes, sir, I know the type, sir — millionaires who run out of carfare and borrow three dollars from small capitalists in order to make the little fellows feel at ease with them.

CUNNINGHAM. Be that as it may, Fuller, when I found my wife in that man's arms it gave me the one biggest surprise of my life. [*Gazes absently into fire.*] There 's no fool like an old fool, but, oh, there is balm in Gilead. Revenge is sweet to the mildest man. She has been stung as well as I. [*A crafty look comes into his face, and he beckons the butler toward him and hands him another bill.*] Do me a favor, Fuller.

FULLER [*looking at the bill*] Gladly, sir.

CUNNINGHAM. When I 'm gone tell Mrs. Cun-

ningham that I shan't be worried if she does n't pay the rent for this suite.

FULLER. Yes, sir. Anything more, sir?

CUNNINGHAM. That's all — I leave in the morning. Until then my troubles do not begin. [*Crosses to door right, turns, and winks at Fuller.*]

[*Exit Cunningham, and the doorbell rings. Fuller goes to hallway in answer to bell. There is a bustling heard in the hallway and a woman sweeps in through doorway, from left, abreast of butler. She is an elderly, overdressed, stout person with something of a waddle in her carriage.*]

FULLER. They're not receiving anyone, ma'am.

WOMAN. Oh, that's all right. I'm her mother. I'll go right to her room. [*Starts toward doorway right, but the butler blocks her way.*]

FULLER. But, ma'am —

WOMAN. I guess you're a pretty fresh butler, are n't you? I'm her mother, I tell you — [*Fuller eyes her closely.*] Well of all nerve! You must be new to the butler business. [*Pokes her fingers in his side whiskers, but the butler continues to stare.*] Say, you've never worked in swell places before, have you? Well, I want you to know that I'm a lady — I am — and I won't take impudence from any damned butler.

FULLER [*spontaneously*] Well, if this don't beat Hell! [*She glares at him a moment, then a look of recognition comes to her face.*] Don't you know me after all these years, Marie? [*She swoons,*

and he leads her to sofa. She takes a drink of brandy which he hands her.]

WOMAN. George Thompson, but this is one knockout. [*She straightens up with pride.*] But you see where I've landed the kid you threw at me, don't you? May God be thanked that you didn't keep her. But honest to Moses, George, didn't you know her at all?

FULLER. I haven't seen her since she was a month old, and I've only been here two days. And I'm leaving to-morrow.

WOMAN. Well, don't wake her up — she'll be having enough disillusionments in time.

FULLER. Yes — they will be coming, doubtless. [*He wags his head, and the two gaze into the fire. Then the woman begins to laugh almost hysterically. She puts her feet up to the fire and slightly raises her skirt, revealing a none too stylish ankle and apparel.*]

WOMAN. Sit down here, George. [*She pulls the butler down on sofa beside her.*] Gee, but ain't this some world! To think that Muriel Cunningham — Muriel Van Vleet Cunningham — is none other than your little Sadie. [*She laughs again.*] Believe me, I haven't been living on Manhattan Island all my life for nothing. I'm responsible for her getting into this nest, and now I've come to get mine. I guess we won't shake that old gink down. He's simply nutty about Sadie, and when we get through pulling his leg he will be able to take one step from the Bronx to the Battery. Let me put you next, George, he's rolling in money.

FULLER. Yes, so I'm told.

WOMAN. And ain't it lucky that I took the kid instead of you? You would never have gotten her into anything like this.

FULLER. I hope not — I mean — er, probably not. I'll admit that you are a clever woman, Marie.

WOMAN. Clever ain't the word, George. I'm profound. And up to this moment I haven't even let him see me.

FULLER. You'd better not let him see you now, either.

WOMAN. Why not? I'm not such a gloom as all that to look at.

FULLER. No, it isn't that — I was thinking you'd better come back here to-morrow afternoon — after I'm gone, see?

WOMAN [*considering*] I guess you're right. [*She rises.*] I'll beat it back to my Newport villa by the sea [*swaggers*] up on West 183rd Street. [*Helps herself to cigars.*] I'll take some of these along to my old man — I'm a good soul, George. Didn't I take good care of you? You had nothing to complain of up till the day I left you.

FULLER. I didn't complain then. [*She looks at him curiously.*] That is, Marie — oh, you know — I took it in the right spirit.

WOMAN. Well, I'm off. Take care of Sadie and don't let that old mark get run over by a street car till after I get to him to-morrow.

FULLER. Don't forget to come back — to-morrow.

WOMAN [*with a wave of her hand*] Trust me —to-morrow. [*Exit smiling.*]

FULLER [*musing*] To-morrow — she 'll be just in time to pay the rent.

CURTAIN

THE HARBOR OF LOST SHIPS

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

Adapted from a short story by Ellen Payne Huling

BY

LOUISE WHITEFIELD BRAY

CHARACTERS

BILLY GOSSE, *a crippled lad of fourteen*
MOIRA GOSSE, *his sister, a girl of twenty*
ISAAC HAAN, *an elderly neighbor*
PARSON TORBIN, *a young minister*

DIALECT: *The Labrador inflection is largely a matter of clipping words, "see 't," "wi' you," etc. The accusative of the personal pronoun is lacking. The Labrador fisherman says "he," "she," "they," for "him," "her," "them," or clips any of these into "un," i. e., "hear un." The neuter gender, likewise, is lacking. For it either the masculine or feminine is used, according to preference. Moira, Billy, and Isaac speak the dialect. The Parson has had somewhat more education.*

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THE HARBOR OF LOST SHIPS

SCENE: *The bleak gray light of a winter afternoon comes through the windows of the Gosse cottage on Lone Island, off the coast of Labrador. Billy Gosse is lying on a couch near the door of his room with Moira knitting near him. Although he is fourteen, he is only a wee lad, and seems even smaller because he is so ill. The room, although the kitchen of the better type of Labrador house, is very barely furnished, but immaculate. Through the one window (rear right) is seen a bit of the bleak, snow-covered landscape. Under the window is a shelf containing several red geraniums in tin cans from which the labels have been removed. Next the window is a table covered cozily with a bright red cloth. On it are Moira's workbasket, a Bible, and an unshaded oil lamp. On nails near by hang Moira's wraps and Billy's homemade crutch. Through the door (rear left) we catch further glimpses of the bare Labrador country when one of the neighbors lifts the old-fashioned latchstring. Beyond the couch, table, and a few stiff-backed chairs, the only furniture in the room is an old range, the pipe projecting through the roof instead of through the wall. A teakettle sings on the front of the stove, and an old, brown earthenware teapot is set at the back. By the stove stands a water butt and over this are rough*

shelves of dishes. A door left leads to the woodshed, and a door right to Billy's room. Hand-woven rugs on floor. Other chairs according to size of stage.

COSTUMES: *Moira Gosse wears a bright flannel waist with a handkerchief folded round her throat, a full woolen skirt, a fresh percale apron, and skin boots. The Parson and Isaac wear similar boots. They are home-cured and home-sewed and come to the knees. When Moira goes out, she puts on a sweater, knitted cap, a heavy old ulster, scarf, and mittens.*

Billy wears a light shirt turned back at the throat, knee trousers, heavy knitted stockings, moccasins, and a warm gray wrapper.

The Parson's suit is the conventional shabby black, skimpy and shiny, and his overcoat is too small and too thin to keep out the Labrador cold. His sealskin cap pulls down over his ears. Isaac is dressed in the Labrador fisherman's costume, skin boots, fur cap, knitted muffler, several sweaters, and a short, thick coat or Mackinaw.

[*Moira knits quietly, keeping close watch of Billy.*]

BILLY. Could ye be puittin' my crutch by me, sister?

MOIRA [*leaning forward as he stretches out his hand*] Ay, lad. [*She takes the homemade crutch from the nail and hands it to Billy, who stands it up by his couch.*] But ye 'll not be needin' it the day. Why do ye want it?

BILLY. When I see 't here by me, I 'm for-

gettin' I 'm ill an' I think I 've but put it aside for a nap.

MOIRA. I would ye had never to use the thing.

BILLY. Moira! 'T is a beautiful crutch! Parson ne'er made such another. I 'm thinkin' the lame lads on the mainland have all crutches one pattern, but mine be the only one thislike.

MOIRA. Sh-h, now, Billy. Is 't the fever makes ye chatter so? Rest a while, lad, an' ye can hear the wind beat back the tide.

[*Both seem to be listening to the tide. After a moment Billy sighs.*]

MOIRA [*leaning forward*] What 's troublin' ye, lad?

BILLY. 'T is nothin'. I was but thinkin' where the lost tides go, an' the stars in the dawn, an' most where the lost ships go. There 's a powerfu' many o' they, I 'm thinkin'.

MOIRA. Powerfu' many.

BILLY. There 's hunderds, I 'm thinkin', hunderds o' ships, an' hunderds o' men, like the fishin' fleet beatin' north in June.

MOIRA. Donna think on 't now, lad.

BILLY [*not heeding*] An' 't is somewhere they goes, for they never comes back. Have ye heard where it is, Moira, the harbor of lost ships?

MOIRA. Nay, Billy, 't is a far sail to that port.

BILLY. Aye, 't is far. 'T will be a grand place, wi' grass an' trees so beautiful they canna leave. 'T will be to the south, beyond the ice. O sister, will ye take me there sometime?

MOIRA. The Lord forbid! Look now, 't is all tired ye are. Lie still an' I 'll tell ye about St.

Johns where all the schooners come from. [*She smooths his hair gently as she talks.*] 'T is wonerfu' fine. On the hill the governor sits to see the ships pass by. And beyond are moors full o' the loveliest flowers, star o' Bethlehem an' vetch an' the rest. Up on the high moors 't is warm an' still; ye can lie an' look up at the blue; 't is warm an' soft an' quiet there, far above the weary sea —

[*Billy's hand slips from hers. She stoops to kiss him. As she starts to put away her knitting, Isaac Haan tramps up to the outer door. Moira opens it for him, closing it again quickly to shut out the cold wind.*]

MOIRA. Come in, neighbor. Sh-h, the lad 's just sleepin'.

[*Isaac and Moira converse in low tones on the opposite side of the room from Billy.*]

ISAAC [*stamping his feet and snapping his fingers as quietly as possible*] 'T is an evil wind, Moira. I 'm nipped to the bone wi' the cold.

MOIRA. I hope ye 've come to no harm. Ye be old to be bravin' this weather an' o'er soon from the sick bed.

ISAAC. I 'll be warm in a bit. The womenfolk sent me over to see if ye 'd wood to keep ye goin' while yer father 's awa'. They 'd gie me no peace till I come.

MOIRA. 'T were neighborly in they, Isaac. Zure, the wind 's eaten the wood in my fire till I 've naught but a few sticks left. Cleave me enough for the day an' father 'll pay when he 's back from the mainland.

ISAAC. We 'll not be mindin' the pay.

MOIRA. 'T is kind. Have ye the time for cleavin' it now, Isaac?

ISAAC. Aye, lass.

MOIRA. Ye 'll find the axe in the woodshed yonder. Mayhap we 'd best move the lad into his room, less he wake at the cleavin'.

[*Isaac and Moira go over to Billy's couch. As Isaac lifts Billy, Moira wraps a shawl about him.*]

MOIRA. Raise un soft an' careful, Isaac, an' I think ye 'll not be wakin' un.

ISAAC. 'T is zure there 's more spirit nor flesh to the lad. He weighs but a trifle.

BILLY [*half rousing*] Moira!

MOIRA. Quiet, Billy. 'T is best ye should sleep, lad.

[*As they come out again, Isaac takes off his coat, cap, and muffler and hangs them up on the nails.*]

ISAAC. How does the lad, do ye think, Moira?

MOIRA. All day the fever 's been on he, makin' un restless an' chatterin' an' full o' whimsies. Between whiles he sleeps, but 't is a strange, stupid sleep, leavin' un weaker nor before. He 's no so well, Isaac.

ISAAC. He were aye white an' frail-like, remember.

MOIRA. Aye, so frail I 've feared many the time he 'd slip frae my hands. He may be slippin' now, Isaac.

ISAAC. Have ye let un know how ill he be?

MOIRA. Nay. How could I tell un?

ISAAC. Ye mun tell un an' send for Parson Torbin. The lad 's never been converted.

MOIRA. He 'll see no parson.

ISAAC. 'T is but right that he be prepared. 'T is for the good of his soul.

MOIRA. I 'll not have un troubled. Ye mind the time old Parson Graff o' Roarin' Cove preached on hell torment? 'T was a wild night outside. Billy sat just starin' into the pit o' dark behind the pulpit an' the look in the lad's eyes! What 's a child like Billy to do wi' hell?

ISAAC. 'T is hell he be bound for, the lad, your own brother, less he be converted. If ye willna let the lad see the Parson, 't is the Parson's duty to see the lad whether ye will or no. If he or any other Christian man lets the lad die unprepared, then the sin rests on his head.

[*The Parson passes the window.*]

ISAAC. Yon that passed was the Parson. 'T is the Lord hath sent un!

[*Moira opens the door.*]

MOIRA. Come in, zur!

[*The Parson enters, coughing. The sea wind blows in with him.*]

PARSON. Aye, but the wind is bitter!

MOIRA. I 'll be fetchin' ye a mug-up to warm ye.

[*She goes to the stove and pours out a cup of tea.*]

PARSON [*as Moira is getting the cup and filling it*] Good-day, neighbor!

ISAAC. Good-day, Parson. 'T is no a day to thank God for Labrador. Have they called ye far?

PARSON. Nay, there 's none needin' me. I 've come but over the road from the parsonage.

MOIRA [*handing Parson the tea*] Drink 't.

[*As the Parson drinks she lifts a cover from the stove and turns to Isaac.*]

MOIRA. The fire 's burnin' very swift, Isaac. If ye could be cleavin' the wood now —

ISAAC. I 'll be doin' it. Remember, lass!

[*As Isaac goes out, Moira turns to the Parson abruptly.*]

MOIRA. Why did ye come?

PARSON. T' see Billy.

MOIRA. Ye know ye 'll not see him. Ever since he heard Parson Graff talk o' hell, he 's been wonerfu' feared o' dyin'.

PARSON. But if he should die unprepared!

MOIRA. He 's no need to be prepared. He 's never a thought or a deed that isna sweet!

PARSON. Moira, ye know not what ye are sayin'. There 's sin in us all from the day we are born. There 's no hope for any soul, no matter how young he be, less he find his justification by faith and confession of sin.

MOIRA. The Lord wouldna hurt Billy. He couldna!

PARSON. Moira! 'T is the Book itself says it. "Every spirit that confesseth is of God, and every spirit that confesseth not is not of God. But for the unbelieving, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. The smoke of their torment goeth up forever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night." Moira, ye must let me see the child! Canna ye see that 't is faith alone that can save him?

MOIRA. Aye, but there 's more nor one faith!

Ye 've yours, and I 've mine! I 'm not believing the Lord means Billy in aught that ye say the Book says. Ye can pick a bit here an' pick a bit there, an' I, bein' but an ignorant woman-body, canna show ye wrong, but my heart tells me ye be na fair nor right to the Lord. Ye 'd have me believe that fear is the breath of his nostrils. He that gave his Son to the Cross, 't is love He would have!

PARSON. Moira, why be ye so stubborn?

MOIRA. I mind what Mother said to me,— "Take care o' Billy. He 's no like the rest. Take care o' he, an' donna let they frighten he."

PARSON. 'T is naught to the fright and the fear he will suffer forever!

MOIRA. I 'm not thinkin' so! I know the lad, and I know the fear came on him 'cause he 'd no conviction o' sin, as Parson Graff said he mun have or be damned. He were but ten, but his eyes were a torment to me. I 'll not have that look come back. He shallna be troubled.

PARSON. But think o' yourself, lass. Think o' your guilt if he dies unprepared — the guilt an' the sin on your head! Lass, I canna rest with that over ye — I love ye too well!

[*A spasm of coughing interrupts him. She puts her hand on his shoulder. Billy calls from the next room.*]

BILLY. Moira!

[*The Parson starts toward the door. Moira puts her body against it. He struggles to enter.*]

MOIRA. Let be! Have I na said ye shallna see him?

[*He steps back baffled. Her face softens.*]

MOIRA. Lad, I canna— If 't were anything else—

[*He takes her in his arms.*]

PARSON. Lass, ye love me! Ye know ye love me—ye mind our words on the hill in June. 'T is by our love I ask—let me see the child!

MOIRA [*pushing him away*] Never! Listen! 'T is not o' my will that ye 'll ever see him. An' ye see un against my will, 't is the end of our love forever. Now go!

[*The Parson goes to the door. Isaac stands at the shed door listening curiously, his arms full of wood.*]

PARSON. If ye are needin' me at the last, hang a red handkerchief from the signal pole at the door. I 'll see 't from my window. Ye know I 'll come. Good-bye, lass. Oh lass—

[*Isaac comes in with the wood.*]

BILLY [*within*] Moira!

MOIRA. I 'm comin', Billy. The fire 'll be needin' that now, Isaac.

ISAAC [*half grumbling as Moira goes out*] The fires and the women they give ye no peace on Lone Island.

[*Moira returns swiftly.*]

MOIRA. He be strangely worse, Isaac!

ISAAC. Call back the Parson!

MOIRA. Nay, ye know I 'll not do 't!

ISAAC. Ye be wicked obstinate, girl. 'T is someun should do yer duty for ye, since ye 've no mind to do it yerself.

MOIRA. Donna trouble me, Isaac. He may be dyin'. Is there naught un can do?

ISAAC. Naught for his body but everything for his soul, an' ye willna!

MOIRA. There mun be someun could help he. O why be there no doctor on Lone Island?

ISAAC. Doctor? Ye'd go for he?

MOIRA. Do ye know of un, Isaac?

ISAAC [*muttering*] No — yes — It was yesterday the doctor from the mainland were on Crooked Island.

MOIRA. What did ye say?

ISAAC [*more firmly*] I said 't was yesterday the doctor from the mainland were on Crooked Island.

MOIRA. The one that cured Jane Pilley?

ISAAC. Aye.

MOIRA. I 'll be goin' for that doctor.

ISAAC [*to himself*] 'T is the hand o' the Lord!

MOIRA [*gathering her wraps together*] O Isaac, could ye na go? [*Isaac looks disturbed, but Moira does not wait for an answer.*] Nay, I know that ye canna. Ye be old, an' sure, my feet are the swifter. An' I darena ask Parson to face the wind on the ice with the cough well-nigh strangling his throat as it is. 'T is I only can go.

ISAAC. Hasten, lass.

MOIRA. Bring the lad out here. 'T is wicked cold yonder an' ye couldna be watchin' he there. Ye can watch, ye an' Mary?

ISAAC. Aye, we can take care o' he.

[*Isaac brings Billy from the inner room while Moira puts on her wraps.*]

MOIRA [*as she helps Isaac*] I may be two hours

if the ice is breakin' as they told me 't were yesterday. Father 'll not be home till to-morrow at best. [*Covering Billy with a shawl*] Let un sleep an' he can. Be ye snug an' warm, Billy?

BILLY. Aye, Moira. Where art goin', sister?

MOIRA [*kissing Billy*] I 'll be bringin' the kind, big doctor an' all goes well. Ye be good to watch, Isaac.

ISAAC [*a little ashamed*] Go on, girl, an' ye 're goin'!

MOIRA. Pray the Lord lend me wings!

[*Moira goes out. Isaac watches her from the window.*]

BILLY [*presently*] Isaac!

ISAAC. Wait a bit, lad.

[*He goes outdoors and brings in the signal pole, to which he fastens the red handkerchief he whips from his pocket.*]

ISAAC [*as he comes in the door with the pole*] Now what is 't, lad?

BILLY. They say ye 'll be needin' another hand for the *Break o' Day* when the fleet goes north in June.

ISAAC. Zo I will, lad.

BILLY. I 'd not be much for the traps, count o' my crutch, but zur, I 's powerfu' good on watch.

ISAAC. Better nor many a full-grown man, lad.

[*He goes out with his pole and returns quickly out of the cold.*]

ISAAC [*continuing*] Donna be thinkin', Billy. 'T is bad for ye. 'T is not mindin' yer sister ye are. Go to sleep.

BILLY. I 'll be tryin', Isaac. I dunno if they

be my thoughts. They come all quiet-like in my head when I 'm not knowin' I 'm thinkin' at all.

ISAAC. What a queer lad ye be!

[*Billy dozes. Isaac fills the teakettle from the water butt by the stove and is building up the fire when the Parson enters.*]

PARSON. Were ye needin' me, Moira darlin'?

ISAAC. Sh-h. [*He glances at Billy.*] She 's gone for the doctor.

PARSON. Then who was it signaled me?

ISAAC. 'T was I called ye. The lad 's failin'.

PARSON. Ah, the wee lad. Is there aught I can do?

ISAAC. Aye. If she willna do her duty by un, then we mun do 't for she.

PARSON. What d' ye mean, Isaac?

ISAAC. Ye mun convert he.

PARSON. I canna talk to the lad when she be na by to know 't.

ISAAC. Less ye save un an' quickly, the lad 's bound for hell.

PARSON. She forbade me most bitter.

ISAAC. Ye 've no call to be thinkin' o' she. 'T is the lad ye mun mind.

PARSON. But ye 're not knowin', man. I 'm lovin' her, Isaac, an' she wouldna forgive me!

ISAAC. I 'm knowin' this, — ye 'd be leavin' a soul to be damned for the whim of a girl. 'T is the lad's last chance while she 's awa'.

PARSON [*after a moment*] Ye be right, Isaac. The Lord forgive me!

[*Billy wakens with a cry, sees the Parson, and cowers.*]

BILLY. I dreamed I were dead an' buried in the Buryin' Cove on the mainland an' 't was black an' chill an' I couldna breathe. 'T was the beginnin' o' hell! O zur, is it dyin' I am?

PARSON [*gently*] It may be so, lad.

BILLY. I 's mortal feared o' dyin'.

[*During this scene the Parson is struggling between sympathy for the lad he is torturing and belief that only through this torture can the child be saved.*]

PARSON. Ye needna be feared, lad. 'T is the Lord God will take to Himself all those that believe on His name. Ye believe in the Lord Jesus, surely, lad?

BILLY. O aye, zur!

PARSON. 'T is but little He asks in return for His infinite grace. Ye 've but to repent of the sin that is in you—

BILLY. O zur, I 've tried. I 've no knowin' how to repent.

PARSON. Ye must, lad. 'T is bitter hard an' ye fail. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," saith He.

BILLY. O zur, I 've told ye I canna be feelin' it. 'T is na there! I 've no knowin' what to do, zur!

PARSON. 'T is sin that is holdin' ye back. He says in the Book, "If we say we have no sin, the truth is not in us." 'T is in ye, lad, an' it mun be repented ere ye can find grace. O think, lad, ye 've but a little time ere ye confront Him, face to face.

BILLY. I 'm feared o' the Lord ye be tellin' me of. Let me go to the Lord Moira loves. He be gentle an' kind. Let me go to Him!

PARSON. He be my Lord, too, Billy, but He be just as well as kind. Moira 's not been tellin' ye all ye should know. For them that do His bidding He has infinite mercy, but for them that do not there is utter damnation. 'T is forever and ever with never a moment's rest. O lad, if ye 'll only obey and repent —

[*Billy starts up absolutely terror-stricken.*]

BILLY. I canna. I canna.

PARSON. Donna harden your heart, lad.

BILLY. Oh, I mun be so wicked that I canna feel it. What shall I do, zur? Oh, where will I go?

PARSON. To the torments of hell!

[*Moira enters and hears.*]

MOIRA. 'T is a lie! [*She rushes to the couch and puts her arms around the trembling child, who sinks back into them.*] 'T is a lie! Donna believe they, my laddie! [*To the Parson*] How can ye say it? How can ye think it? [*She turns fiercely on Isaac.*] Ye tricked me! I 'd got but to the old fisherwoman's hut to be told what ye knew all the time. The doctor were on Crooked Island but he went back to the mainland yesterday, as she herself told ye. Ye tricked me an' tortured my laddie!

[*Isaac tries to speak.*]

ISAAC. Moira, ye —

MOIRA. I 'll not listen. Leave us alone.

THE SCALES AND THE SWORD

A SOCIAL DRAMA IN ONE ACT

BY

FARNHAM BISHOP

CHARACTERS

JOHN ALLOWAY, *a Grocer*
ED ALLEN, *his Clerk* (*Corporal in the National Guard*)
DWIGHT GILMORE, *Attorney-at-Law* (*Captain in the National Guard*)
A LIBRARIAN
A DRUMMER
A MECHANIC
AN OLD IRISHWOMAN } *Refugees from the burning city*
OTHER REFUGEES AND MILITIAMEN
NEWSBOY

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THE SCALES AND THE SWORD

SCENE: *The interior of a typical cheap grocery in a suburban town. The shop is sunk beneath the level of the street and is reached by a descent of three steps to the door, left back — the only entrance. Through the glass panels of this door and over the fly-specked pyramids in the window can be seen the sidewalk and a row of frame houses across the street. The street slopes down from left to right.*

Inside the store are two counters, one right running the full length of the side, and opposite it one half as long, down left. On the shorter counter is a large, nickel-plated pair of scales, on the longer a show case, a cash register, and a large, glass-sided bread box, containing wire shelves loaded with loaves and bearing a prominent placard with the legend, "Alloway's Peerless Loaf, 5¢." Behind this counter are shelves, full of canned goods — at least one shelf being practicable. Between stage left and the door are the usual vegetable boxes and barrels, and more stand outside the door, on the sidewalk. There is a ceiling gas-jet, not practicable.

TIME: *The day of a great fire. Late March afternoon.*

[*Before rise of curtain, Newsboy is heard calling.*]

NEWSBOY. Extra! Big fire! Extra!

[*At rise, Allen, the clerk, discovered. He is a pleasant-looking young chap, with a thoughtful face and uncommonly good carriage, standing behind the counter left, filling paper bags with sugar and weighing them on the scales.*]

NEWSBOY [*off stage*] Extra! Big fire in the city! Extra! [*Enters right, crosses.*] Extra! Big fire in the city! Extra!

ALLEN. Hi, boy, gimme a paper! [*Newsboy enters store; Allen buys paper.*] Where's the fire, kid?

NEWSBOY. Down in Polacktown. Gee, I saw a whole block go up like a celluloid collar!

[*Wind whistles.*]

ALLEN. No cinch stopping it in this wind.

NEWSBOY. Aw, it'll be all over 'fore I can get downtown again. [*Goes up stage as Alloway, the proprietor, a gross, bulky, red-jowled man of forty-five, with a narrow forehead and obstinate jaw, enters and comes down. He is evidently afflicted with a grouch.*]

NEWSBOY. Paper, sir?

ALLOWAY. No! Clear out o' here.

[*Exit Newsboy.*]

NEWSBOY [*off stage*] Extra! Big fire! Extra!

[*Allen drops the paper and resumes work. Alloway crosses to behind right counter, taking off hat and coat.*]

ALLEN. Seen the fire, Mr. Alloway?

ALLOWAY. Think I got any time to fool away on fires? [*Puts on apron*] What you putting up now?

ALLEN. Five pound sugars. [*Snaps string, and puts bag under counter.*]

ALLOWAY. How much off?

ALLEN [*laying his hand on the scale and looking at the dial*] Ounce and a half to the pound.

ALLOWAY. Tighten up the spring and don't weigh any more 'n you can help this afternoon.

ALLEN [*doing mysterious things to the scales with a small screwdriver, and speaking with ill-suppressed sarcasm*] Folks buying here to-day will get good measure.

ALLOWAY. Folks buying here for the next week will get stung a half ounce extra.

ALLEN. Aw, say, Mr. Alloway — is n't that soaking 'em pretty hard?

ALLOWAY [*in a tone of just grievance*] That dirty thief Maloney soaked me twenty dollars for letting me know when the inspector was coming round. Talk about my selling light; look how I have to buy light. [*Takes down a package of cereal from the shelf.*] That scale O. K. now?

ALLEN. Yep.

ALLOWAY [*crosses, holds up package and reads from it*] "Two pounds of Pure Nutriment." [*Tosses it contemptuously into the pan of the scales.*] What 's it good for?

ALLEN. Twenty-nine ounces, counting the box.

ALLOWAY. There you are.

ALLEN. Say, somebody ought to get after those fellows. [*Crossing down left*] Let 's put it up to Dwight Gilmore.

ALLOWAY. Catch me backing any of Dwight

Gilmore's muckraking; upsetting business and getting Maloney and the interests down on me.

ALLEN. They're grafting all you make now. And it all comes out of the little old consumer.

ALLOWAY. Aw, don't talk to me about the little old consumer. He'd consume his little old grandmother if he got the chance. Isn't one of them in that city [*jerks his head toward the right*] wouldn't come in here to bellyache about the Trusts, and then try to pass a plugged nickel for a loaf of my good bread. That's the way it goes, all the way up and down the line. [*Crosses down right.*]

ALLEN. Maybe. But I don't see the justice of it.

ALLOWAY. Justice? What's justice got to do with business?

ALLEN. Dwight Gilmore, he says it's got a pile. He wrote a piece about it for the paper — it ended up something like this [*knits his brows trying to recall the exact words*]: "The longer we cheat the scales of justice the heavier will be the blow of her sword."

ALLOWAY. "Scales of justice, scales of justice"; what the — [*His eye falls on his own scales across the room, and he chuckles violently.*] Oh, you mean that bum pair of balances the old stone lady down at the Court House has in her mitt. Don't you worry none about them, son. So long as Tim Maloney gets *his*, regular, he can fix her scales as easy as I can fix mine.

ALLEN. But what about the sword?

ALLOWAY. Sword? Don't waste any time

fussing about a sword. [*Crossing up behind counter*] People don't go trápesin' around with a sword nowadays. Swords ain't business.

[*The wind, which has been whistling off and on for the last five minutes, gives vent to a long, piercing whoop. A cloud of dust passes up the hill from right to left. Both men look up stage.*]

ALLEN. Pretty high wind this afternoon.

ALLOWAY. It's blowin' dust all over those goods on the sidewalk. Bring 'em in.

[*Alloway, behind long counter, pulls out his ledger, as Allen goes outside and lays hands on a barrel beside the door. He bows his head to the wind, but as he straightens up to lift the barrel, his attention is attracted by something off stage to the right, and he shades his eyes and gazes for a few seconds, before bringing in the barrel and setting it down left of door.*]

ALLEN. Say, there's a funny-looking cloud down there over the city. It's blue-black like a niggerhead, but all puffed up like one of those cum-u-lus-ses.

ALLOWAY. Huh. [*He is not interested in clouds.*]

ALLEN [*goes out, looks again, and returns with a box*] Say, it's risin' and pourin' up at the bottom like smoke. But it can't be the fire, — it's too big.

ALLOWAY [*without looking up*] 'Course it ain't the fire.

[*Allen opens door to go out. The wind shrieks violently, the stage is momentarily darker, and several pieces of charred paper flutter down*

into the street. Allen runs out, picks one up, and rushes into the store.]

ALLEN. Look-a-here, Mr. Alloway, it *is* the fire! It's raining ashes!

ALLOWAY. Git those vegetables in — quick!

[*They hurry out and bring in a heavy boxful between them.*]

ALLEN [*as they work*] The whole city must be burning up!

ALLOWAY. Never you mind the city, — bring in those cabbages!

[*Exeunt both for cabbages. When these are under cover, the two stand in the open doorway to look at the distant fire.*]

ALLEN [*outside of doorway*] It's drivin' on at a block a minute!

ALLOWAY. Can't reach us across the river.

[*He comes inside, crosses to behind right counter and resumes his study of the ledger. Allen comes in and clears the boxes away from the steps. The local fire whistle screams three times, then five, with the stroke of a bell between each blast. Several men run down the street from left to right.*]

ALLEN. General alarm! [*As the last man passes the door*] Hey, Bill! [*Runs to door and shouts after the man, who is by this time off stage.*] Hey, Bill! How's the fire?

BILL'S VOICE. Bad as 'Frisco!

ALLEN. When'd it start?

BILL'S VOICE. Early this mornin' — back o' the Polack quarter. Wind's sweeping it right through the city. They've lost two engines, and sent all over the state for help.

ALLEN. Anybody killed?

BILL'S VOICE. More 'n a hundred. Piles of refugees comin' over the ferry. I'm goin' down to see our engines go over. So long!

[*Alloway looks up for the first time from the ledger.*]

ALLEN. So long! [*Comes inside*] Say, Mr. Alloway, business is pretty slow this afternoon; could n't I take a look at the fire?

ALLOWAY. You stay right here. We 'll get plenty of business from those refugees.

[*Fire apparatus is heard passing rapidly from left to right behind the screen.*]

ALLEN [*goes up to door*] There go the engines down Ferry Street. Guess most of the folks from the city will go up that way.

ALLOWAY. Those big stiffs on Ferry Street always hog the trade. They 'll get all the refugees.

[*The Librarian, a frail little old gentleman, with white side whiskers and shiny black clothes, enters right, limps up the hill, and stands hesitatingly at the door. His ordinarily pale face and neat linen are plentifully begrimed with smoke and soot.*]

ALLEN. Here 's one of them now.

[*The Librarian enters shop, and stands looking around, as if undecided what to do next.*]

ALLEN. How 's the fire?

LIBRARIAN. Dreadful, dreadful. [*Sees chair by the door. Sits down wearily.*] I had no idea walking was so fatiguing. For eighteen years I have walked three blocks from my room to the

library, — I am the assistant custodian of the public library, — and back again at night. Three blocks each way, no more, — except that one walks a great deal in the stacks. And now I have walked for hours.

ALLEN. Lost much?

LIBRARIAN. All gone. Eighty-six thousand volumes, — some of them priceless.

ALLEN. I mean did *you* lose much?

LIBRARIAN [*simply*] Oh, yes, my room was destroyed while we were trying to save the books. You see, the fire came that way.

ALLOWAY [*significantly*] Anything I can do for you?

LIBRARIAN. Oh, yes; I quite forgot. I want some things for camping out.

ALLOWAY. Campin' out?

LIBRARIAN. I believe that is the proper term. Everybody on the ferryboat said that we should have to spend the night in the fields, as the suburbs were already filled. What does one buy to camp out?

ALLOWAY. Better ask my clerk. He goes campin' every summer with the militia.

[*Allen crosses to behind long counter, assembles briskly two loaves of bread, several cans of beans, a jar of bacon, a can of coffee, and hands these to the Librarian in a paper bag.*]

ALLEN. This ought to last you till they start relief stations. You can buy a blanket and a fry pan up street. Better get a hatchet, too.

LIBRARIAN [*taking out purse and fumbling in*

it] I'm afraid I haven't money enough for all those things; and I don't know how to cook.

ALLEN. Better bunk in with a feller who can. This will be a dollar even. — Thank you.

LIBRARIAN. I thank *you*, my young friend. [*Goes up stage to door.*] They are charging very high prices in the city. There was a great disturbance over it.

ALLEN. Rioting?

ALLOWAY. Eh? What sort of prices?

LIBRARIAN. I saw a crowd forcibly taking bread from a bakery, because the baker wanted twenty-five cents a loaf. It was dreadful; and not a policeman to be seen.

[*Alloway wets a pencil with his lips and draws a "2" before the "5¢" on the bread-box placard. Librarian opens the door. The wind whistles.*]

ALLEN. Have they called out any of the militia yet?

LIBRARIAN. I really do not know. Here come some more people. You had better ask them. [*Shivers*] I think I shall buy that blanket now. Good-day, gentlemen. [*Closes door with a little half bow; exit left across window.*]

ALLEN. Poor old devil!

ALLOWAY. Damned old sneak. Cheated me out of four dollars' worth.

[*Half a dozen refugees enter outside from right. Their leader, the drummer, is the only one of the little band who looks either clean or comfortable. He is a big, jovial man, carrying his war-worn suit-case with accustomed ease, and wearing across his left shoulder a jaunty blanket roll stamped in red*

letters "American House." He is followed by a little man lugging a huge bundle wrapped up in a crazy quilt; the man's wife, with a hand satchel and a gilt-framed chromo; a woman with a shawl over her head, and two angora kittens in a cardboard box; and two young men carrying a steamer trunk between them. They stop outside the door, and are seen to consult.]

DRUMMER [*enters the shop, sees the sign on the bread box, sets down his suitcase, center, opens the door, and calls*] Twenty-five cents, people!

[*The five crowd in eagerly. The Drummer crosses to long counter.*]

DRUMMER. Half a dozen of your twenty-five-cent whites.

[*Allen reaches into the bread box to serve him.*]

ALLOWAY [*stops Allen and demands of the Drummer*] What you paying in town now?

ONE OF THE YOUNG MEN WITH THE TRUNK. Fifty cents a loaf.

OTHER YOUNG MAN WITH THE TRUNK. Shet your fool mouth!

ALLOWAY [*Changing the sign to 50¢.*] Fifty cents it is, and the rest accordin'.

THE LITTLE MAN WITH THE BUNDLE. It 's highway robbery!

ALLOWAY. Take it or leave it. You don't *have* to buy here. [*Crossing down a step or two.*]

DRUMMER [*laying his hand on his ample waistcoat*] No, friend? Have you tried buying down town?

[*Allen crosses to left. All move up to the coun-*

ter and buy briskly, except woman with kittens. Woman with chromo notices this and approaches.]

WOMAN WITH CHROMO. Are n't you going to buy anything?

WOMAN WITH KITTENS. No. [*Stroking kittens*] These are all I 've got left.

WOMAN WITH CHROMO [*beckoning to her spouse*] John! Oh, John!

[*He comes up with a bag full of food, and they hitch up two vegetable boxes and use the back of the chromo for a table for the three. The two young men, who have been talking aside with Allen at left, sit down on their trunk to eat. The Drummer makes himself comfortable on his inverted suitcase, center.*]

DRUMMER. Cheer up, people! It might be a blame sight worse. Next month you 'll all be buying parlor grands from me with the insurance money. That 's the way they did at 'Frisco.

SECOND YOUNG MAN WITH THE TRUNK. And we 'd build her up again, same as 'Frisco.

CHORUS. You bet!

JOHN, THE MARRIED MAN [*lifting the bag off the chromo and displaying that work of art*] Me and my wife are goin' to open a picture store with this. [*General laugh.*]

ALLEN. Any looting in the city?

FIRST YOUNG MAN WITH THE TRUNK. Lots. They say the militia shot one man on sight.

DRUMMER. They did. I saw it. [*All look to him to tell the story. Darkness begins to fall and the red glow of the burning city to flicker on the walls of the room and the houses opposite. The*

wind moans at intervals.] When they saw the old hotel was bound to go, they told us guests to take all we could and welcome; that 's how I came by this blanket. But there was some did n't wait for an invitation. As I was hurrying down Central Avenue to the ferry, I happened to look up one of the cross streets toward the fire, and there, halfway between me and that moving Hell-wall was a man, pushing and straining at the steel shutters of a jeweler's window. The fire was n't three blocks away, and coming on fast, but he never looked up. He gave one big heave, the shutter slam-banged against the brick wall, and the man lifted his boot heel and drove it through the plate glass, twice. He had his head and shoulders inside, and was grabbing right and left, when a column of infantry came swinging round the next corner into the street. The man at the window ran for it, but they never tried to catch him. The officer in front turned and said something quiet, a little militia man jumped up on the sidewalk, knelt down and took good aim, and just as the looter reached the corner and started to turn, — bing! went the gun, and down he went, just as if he 'd been tackled around the knees. One of the gold bracelets he was carrying rolled halfway 'cross the street to where I was standin'; and one of the soldiers kicked it back into the blood that was dripping down into the gutter, as they marched on and left him lying there, with the fire rolling down on him.

Woman with the Chromo. Oh-h! What did they do that for? Why did n't they just arrest him?

DRUMMER. No time. The man who makes trouble now has got to be put out of the way — quick.

ALLEN. That 's what they tell us; shoot looters on sight.

WOMAN WITH THE CHROMO. But to kill a man for a little stealing!

ALLOWAY [*down right*] Anybody who 'd steal in a time like this ought to be shot. Life and property have got to be protected.

SECOND YOUNG MAN WITH THE TRUNK [*speaking significantly, from the darkest corner*] There 's more ways of stealin' than through store windows.

ALLOWAY. What d' you mean?

SECOND YOUNG MAN WITH THE TRUNK. Over store counters.

ALLOWAY [*furious*] That 'll do for you — all of you! If you don't want to buy anything else, get out. — Yes, the lot of you. This ain't a waitin' room.

[*The refugees pick up their loads and go out wearily, the Drummer last of all. The others stand at the top of the steps, pointing at the burning city, which throws a ruddy glare upon them.*]

ALLEN [*to Drummer as he is going out*] Do you think they will need more troops?

DRUMMER. They need 'em now. Fire lines are n't half tight enough. [*Five refugees exeunt left. Drummer mounts steps, stops, and turns.*] If you fellers keep on raising the price of bread, they 'll need regulars! [*Slams door; exit.*]

ALLOWAY [*unmoved*] Light the gas, Ed.

ALLEN [*strikes a match and holds it over gas-jet without result*] Guess the gas works have gone with the rest. [*Allen goes up to door. Alloway gives an angry grunt, breaks open a package of candles, lights one, and sticks it with its own hot grease to the counter, where it will illumine the space between the cash register and the side of the bread box. The rest of the store is lit by the flickering glare of the fire.*] Say, Mr. Alloway, had n't I better run up to the Armory and see if Gilmore's company 's goin' to be called out to-night? It 's only a step up street.

ALLOWAY. No, sir; you stay right here to-night — call or no call.

ALLEN. But you said life and property ought to be protected.

ALLOWAY. That 's different. There 'll be a whole boatful of those fellers along in a minute, and I want my clerk.

[*The fire bells and whistles begin again.*]

ALLEN. Listen. Two — two — three two's! Militia Call! [*Throws off straw cuffs and apron.*]

ALLOWAY. Hold on there!

[*A bugle, off stage to left, sounds impatiently.*]

ALLEN. Can't. There goes the "Assembly." [*Runs up stage; starts to open door.*]

ALLOWAY. You leave this store to-night and you 'll never set foot in it again!

ALLEN. You can't fire a man for goin' on State service. It 's against the law.

ALLOWAY. I 'll fire you for sassin' me, then! Come back, if you want your job!

ALLEN [*stands at the top of steps, looks*

toward city, then down at his employer, his young face shining in the fire's light] To Hell with your job! [*Points toward city*] I'm goin' to help *them.* [*Exit left, running.*]

[*Alloway runs up steps, shaking his fist after Allen. He is evidently in a towering rage. He turns and looks at the city, with none of the pity and awe that the others have shown in their faces. The murmuring of an approaching crowd is heard off stage to right, and Alloway rubs his hands and smiles at the prospect of doing a good business. Under the circumstances, and with the fire's light dyeing his long white apron as if with blood, he does not look pretty. Entering the shop, Alloway takes the candle and looks into the front of the bread box. He taps the glass with his forefinger as he counts each loaf, and scowls at the small number left. Coming down center, he regards the box and the placard fixedly for a moment, then, with an air of decision, pulls down the card and tears it up. Going behind the counter and replacing the candle by the cash register, Alloway takes from under the counter a heavy nickel-plated revolver and a box of cartridges, loads the weapon deliberately, and puts it back where it will be handy. The light from the candle shows Alloway crouching on a high stool among his possessions, like the figure of "Goods" in "Everyman." The red light from without throws on the window a procession of silhouettes bowed under huge, shapeless burdens, as the Mechanic, the Old Irishwoman, and a half dozen others enter and toil slowly up the hill. Opposite the window, the Mechanic turns and helps*

the Old Irishwoman with her bundle. They enter the store and swing their loads to the ground. Except the Old Irishwoman, they are all men; a poorer, grimier, and more determined-looking lot than the first band of refugees. Several are day laborers, foreigners.]

MECHANIC [*putting down bundle and crossing center*] Any bread left in *this* store?

ALLOWAY [*behind counter*] Plenty — [*general sigh of satisfaction and forward movement*] — at a dollar a loaf. [*General recoil and inarticulate cry of protest.*]

MECHANIC. Say, man, you don't mean that. Why, one store down on Ferry Street was givin' away bread.

ALLOWAY. You 'd better go get some there, then.

MECHANIC. There ain't a mite left anywhere. Piles of folk will have to go hungry to-night. It 's murder to hold us up like this.

ALLOWAY. It 's supply and demand. Take it or leave it; there 's plenty more 'll buy if you don't.

[*They consult together for a few seconds. One man makes a passionate gesture and goes out the door, but pauses outside, turning up his collar as the wind whistles by.*]

MECHANIC [*as if clinching an argument*] Where else can we get any? There may be a thousand people here in a minute. [*Goes to counter and lays down a crumpled bill.*] Gimme a loaf, you — [*Remembers the old Irishwoman, checks himself.*]

[*The other men also buy, two of them chipping in to buy one loaf. They begin to eat ravenously.*]

OLD IRISHWOMAN [*coming up to counter, timidly*] Misther, misther, can't ye give me somethin' to ate for a nickel, plaze?

ALLOWAY. No!

OLD IRISHWOMAN. But 't was the price of a loaf this mornin', sor.

ALLOWAY. It ain't to-night.

OLD IRISHWOMAN. Won't ye plaze give me a loaf for it now, sor? 'T is all I 've left in the world.

ALLOWAY. No!

[*She turns away and feebly tries to lift her heavy bundle. The crowd murmurs angrily. The Mechanic lifts his hands restrainedly, goes to counter, and speaks to the grocer in a low tone.*]

MECHANIC. Look here, bo; her son Dan was a fireman, driver on No. 5 engine, that was cut off by the fire when the oil tanks blew up. Dan was killed trying to save his horses. She don't know it yet. You would n't refuse her a loaf of bread, would you?

ALLOWAY. If you care that much for her, dig up a dollar.

MECHANIC [*searches his pockets, holds out his hat to the other men. They shake their heads*] You 've cleaned us out. Give her a loaf now, and I 'll pay you the first dollar I earn.

ALLOWAY. Got a job?

MECHANIC. Nope; factory 's gone up.

ALLOWAY. Nothin' doin'. [*Turns away.*]

MECHANIC. Nothin' doin', hey? [*Jumps to where the old Irishwoman is standing.*] Gimme

that nickel! [*Throws it at Alloway, who dodges.*] There 's your money! And here 's her bread!

[*He smashes the glass front of the bread box with a chair. Man outside runs in and joins others in a rush, but before they can climb the counter, or the Mechanic get a loaf out of the box, Alloway produces a revolver, and they retreat to the door.*]

MECHANIC. Go ahead, you woman-robber, shoot us down!

ALLOWAY. Get out of my store, you gang of looters!

MECHANIC. Looters! It 's you and your dollars that make looters. You give her her bread or we 'll smash you like we did your bread box! [*He advances a few steps and the others press after him.*]

ALLOWAY. Clear out, or I 'll shoot!

MECHANIC [*jeering*] You have n't the nerve. Now, boys — [*As he turns to exhort the others for a rush, the bugle sounds the "Advance" off stage to left.*]

ALL. The militia!

ALLOWAY [*running to window*] Help! Help!

[*The refugees start for the door, except Mechanic.*]

MECHANIC. Don't run! Don't run, or they 'll shoot you down! Stand your ground; we 've got our rights!

[*He catches the first of the two who are half way out of the door, and holds them back. All three are pushed back into the shop with considerable violence as Captain Gilmore enters from left*

and springs down through the door. He is followed by Allen in corporal's uniform, a big sergeant carrying a lighted lantern in his left hand, and four or more enlisted men. They are in blue service uniform, light marching order. They halt just inside the door, the sergeant holding up his lantern. The stage becomes light, showing Alloway behind long counter, the refugees at back, and Captain Gilmore standing before the counter, left. The scales at his left hand, and the drawn sabre in his right make his soldierly figure and keen, lawyer-like face, with the eyes of an idealist, appear the incarnation of armed justice.]

GILMORE. What 's going on here?

ALLOWAY. My shop 's being looted, that 's what 's goin' on. Look what that feller did. [*Points at the bread box and the Mechanic.*]

GILMORE [*to Mechanic, sternly*] You know the penalty for looting?

MECHANIC. 'T is n't us that are looting, sir. It 's that fat thief behind the counter.

GILMORE. What do you mean?

MECHANIC. He 's charging a dollar a loaf for bread.

GILMORE. Is that true?

ALLOWAY. If a man comes into my store and wants a loaf of bread bad enough to pay a dollar for it, have n't I a right to take it?

GILMORE. No! You have no right to charge a cent above the legal price.

OLD IRISHWOMAN. Heaven bless yer honor for that word. [*Crosses to counter, right.*] Will ye give me a loaf of bread now, sor?

ALLOWAY. No! [*To Gilmore*] I guess I know my rights under the law. You put those looters out of here and let my business alone, or Tim Maloney will have those shoulder straps off of you quick enough, Mr. Dwight Gilmore.

GILMORE. I am going to put you out.

ALLOWAY. What?

GILMORE. This store and its contents are confiscated by the State.

ALLOWAY. I'll have the law—

GILMORE. *I* am the law.

ALLOWAY. You 're crazy!

GILMORE. Listen. This city has been placed under martial law, which is the will of the commanding officer. As such, I declare these foodstuffs the property of the State. Get out of here unless you want to help us distribute them.

ALLOWAY. Get out! Help you give away *my* property! [*Becomes inarticulate.*]

GILMORE. Corporal Allen! [*Allen comes down center; salutes.*] You work here?

ALLEN. Used to, sir.

GILMORE. Take charge of this place and distribute rations at your discretion.

ALLEN. Yes, sir. [*Salutes, goes behind counter left, lays his rifle against the wall.*]

ALLOWAY. Ed Allen, don't you touch a thing! [*Produces revolver, comes from behind long counter, crosses, and thrusts revolver in Captain Gilmore's face.*] Get out o' here yourself with your tin soldiers, or I 'll shoot your head off!

[*Allen and the other militiamen hesitate to raise their rifles for fear Alloway may shoot their offi-*

cer. The Captain stands motionless for a few seconds, then with a quick blow of his sabre he strikes the revolver from Alloway's hand. The Captain's left hand, thrown out behind to preserve his balance, strikes the scales and sends them clashing behind the counter. There is a general rush for Alloway. The big sergeant, who has hung his lantern on a nail by the door, grabs Alloway by the collar, while the enlisted men hold back the enfuriated refugees with their rifles. The latter become quiet, and all look to the Captain. His face is sterner, but his voice is unchanged from that of a routine command.]

GILMORE. Sergeant, take that man outside and shoot him against the nearest blank wall.

ALLOWAY [*as he is dragged out, surrounded by the soldiers and followed by the refugees*] I 'll have the law on you, I 'll have the law — [*Is choked off by sergeant as they mount stairs.*]

[*Gilmore turns to follow them.*]

ALLEN [*appealingly*] Captain! —

GILMORE. When you have finished here, Corporal, report to me in the city for further duty, at once. That is all.

ALLEN [*saluting*] Yes, sir.

[*Alloway and his escort are seen through the window to pass right, and are heard off stage to right. Gilmore strides out of sight after them.*]

OLD IRISHWOMAN [*who has sunk into a chair by the door*] Ochone! Ochonorie! Mother of God, have mercy on his soul! Ochone, ochone!

[*A heavy body is placed against outside of wall, right. Allen listens, fascinated.*]

GILMORE'S VOICE [*raised in command*] Firing squad, attensh'n. With ball cartridge, load! [*The rattle and click of the breach locks are heard.*] Ready. At the prisoner, aim!

ALLOWAY'S VOICE [*like the scream of a frightened horse*] Don't! Don't! For God's sake—

GILMORE'S VOICE. Fire!

[*The crash of a volley is heard. Something soft and heavy slides down the outside of the wall to the ground.*]

GILMORE'S VOICE. Firing squad, fall in, quickly! Company attensh'n. Forrard, guide right, hr'rch!

[*The cadenced tramp of a considerable body of men passes away to right. All is silent. The men from the city are still outside looking at what had been Alloway. Allen goes to the broken bread box, takes out a loaf, and holds it out to the Old Irishwoman.*]

CURTAIN

34794

Baker, George P.

Harvard Plays

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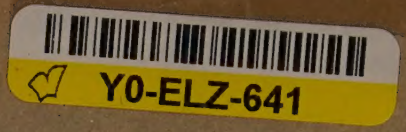
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